ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION IN THE SAME GRADE AND CERTAIN OTHER STUDENT RELATED FACTORS ON THE READING AND MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT GAINS OF FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

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This study was designed to determine if there were significant differences in the achievement gains of retained and nonretained fifth grade students. The study also examined the related factors of attendance, self-concept, and attitude toward school and their effects on students' achievement gains.

An examination of achievement data indicated that while both groups improved in achievement, the achievement of the nonretained group was significantly higher than the retained group in both reading and mathematics. The gain was significant in reading at grade 3 only, but in mathematics the rate of gain was significant from grades 2 through 5.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem Situation

Promotion of students versus retention of students has been an educational issue since the turn of the century (Goodlad, 1963 and Cunningham and Owens, 1976). Retention rates at the turn of the century were as high as 16 percent, and they dropped to a low of 5 percent by 1940 according to Goodlad and Cunningham. By the 1960s, age and maturity became factors in promotional decisions causing social promotion to emerge as a common practice (Lindvig, 1983).

Retention rates vary substantially across the nation and between minority and nonminority students (Jackson, 1975). Data collected by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1972 indicated that approximately one million, seven thousand pupils were retained in that year at a cost to the nation's taxpayers of nearly one billion dollars (Jackson, 1975). Jackson's study of retention practices followed the publication of these data. An extensive review of research was conducted by Jackson to determine whether students whose academic achievement was poor, or who manifested social or emotional adjustment problems benefited from retention. His conclusions are reported in a later chapter.

During the mid seventies, the public's concern about the steady decline in achievement in basic reading and mathematics skills increased. The evidence that students lacked adequate skills was apparent in the business arena where employers had to offer remediation classes in order to retain employees. Later, the Gallup Poll results as reported in Phi Delta Kappan (1986) revealed that 72 percent of the public favored stricter promotion and graduation requirements for schools. Such concerns prompted the Secretary of Education to appoint a task force to study the status of education in America. The National Committee on Excellence in Education was appointed in 1981, and the findings were reported in A Nation at Risk (1983). One of the recommendations proposed was that stricter promotion requirements be implemented in schools.

Prior to the issuance of this report, the competency movement had emerged to address the issue of declining achievement. Performance criterion-referenced testing of students was occurring in many school systems across the nation. One report, The Nation Responds (1984), published by the U. S. Department of Education, listed 22 states as having enacted criterion testing. This report also listed 20 states as having strict promotion guidelines and graduation requirements.

Even though education was high on the nation's agenda during the eighties, there were concerns about the impact of the new policies on students in urban cities. In The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching report, An Imperiled Generation (1988), attention was called to the attendance and dropout rates in

Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, and Philadelphia as examples of the negative impact of the new requirements on students who were identified as at-risk.

Boyer's (1987) assessment of the new policies was that with the reform movement in schools where the student population came from middle and high economic areas, achievement would accelerate but other schools located in large, urban, poor areas would remain troubled. Six suggestions were made by Boyer which he felt would make a positive impact on schools in low socioeconomic areas. He stated that:

> We should provide better teaching in schools, use measures other than grade standards and tests to provide teachers with information about students, confront the problems of poor children, give priority to early education, affirm the centrality of language in educating students, and provide enrichment programs that reflect changing work and family patterns. (p. 6).

The impact of stricter grade requirements on at-risk students was also a concern of Pellicano (1987). He called for a new policy agenda that would address at-risk students. His position was that the curriculum would have to be reassessed, and redesigned to recognize the social diversity of all groups if at-risk numbers are to diminish.

Concern about the effects of the reform movement on at-risk students was voiced by other groups, such as the Research and

Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development. In its 1987 publication, Children In Need, strategies to benefit disadvantaged children were suggested. This group felt that improvements which would be substantive and sustained over a period of time would require more money than is presently allocated for the education of at-risk youth. Secondly, they suggested that welfare reform should be looked at as a critical component of change. Lastly, they suggested that the government, education, businesses, and community leaders make a firm commitment to change developmentally and educationally the conditions for at-risk students. The reports which have been summarized in this study confirm the concerns for the problems which emerged as a result of the increase in policies requiring retention of students.

The Research Problem

A plan which allowed for the retention of students was adopted by the Atlanta Board of Education in 1980. The Pupil Progression Plan (1986) was designed to ensure that all students would acquire basic skills before promotion to the next grade. Specific minimum requirements for each grade, 1 through 7, were included in the plan. All skills listed were to be mastered before promotion to the next level. In addition, a specified level of the reading textbook was to be completed.

In 1981 when the plan was implemented at the first grade level, 18 percent of the first graders were retained. The following

year 19 percent of the first graders and 10 percent of the second graders were retained. The percent of retainees in these grades has remained high as reported in the Atlanta School System's Statistical Report for 1988-89, a report compiled by the Statistical Department of the Atlanta Public School System. Eleven percent of the students in the first grade and 7 percent of students in the second grade were retained in 1989. This, however, represents a decline since 1986 when 20 percent of the first graders and 12 percent of the second graders were retained (Research and Evaluation Comparison Report, 1981-88, see Appendix D). Kindergarten requirements were added to the policy in 1987 (Research and Evaluation Report, 1981-88), and the rate of retention thereafter has been approximately 11 percent.

In 1983, the Georgia General Assembly passed a law requiring third grade students to pass a state criterion-referenced test in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. Since the implementation of this policy, the retention rates at the third grade level in the Atlanta system have ranged from 13 to 16 percent. In 1989, the percentage declined slightly when 12 percent of the third grade students were reported as failing. (Statistical Report, 1988-89).

In 1988, the Atlanta policy was amended, limiting the individual child to one retention at the primary level (kindergarten-third grade) and one at the intermediate level (fourth and fifth grades). This policy change, however, did not affect the status of students in the current fifth grade class, the grade selected for this

study. Because of the original guidelines, some students in grade 5 have one or more retentions as part of their school record.

Since 1985 when the policy became effective at grade 5, the retention rate has ranged from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent. Administrative placements, used when students have already been retained, are overaged or fail to meet requirements, now range from 3.5 percent to 5.6 percent.

In 1989, two percent of the fifth graders were retained (Statistical Report, 1988-89). The Progression Status Report (Research and Evaluation Comparison Report, 1981-89) gives additional data related to administrative placements. The data indicated that about 5 percent of the fifth graders had been placed in grade 6. These students were ineligible for retention based on the 1988 policy change. An increase in the retention rate is evident again at the high school level. According to the 1988-89 retention data, 28.2 percent of the ninth graders were retained (Statistical Report, 1988-89).

This study examined the achievement of promoted versus nonpromoted students of a random sample of fifth graders in eight Atlanta Public Schools. Scores from the reading comprehension and total mathematics subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Spring 1990, as recorded in the 1990 Statistical Report of Atlanta Public Schools, were used. This data were analyzed to determine if students who had not been retained showed greater achievement gains than students who had been retained.

A case study was also conducted using two schools with similar characteristics in retention rates and socioeconomic factors. Other factors analyzed were self-concept, attitude toward school, and discipline. The data were examined to determine if there were differences in these areas for retained and nonretained fifth grade students.

Significance of the Study

A study of the effect of retentions on achievement of students in the Atlanta Public Schools had not been reported since the implementation of the policy in 1981. The intent of the policy was to strengthen the instructional program for all students; however, a large percentage of students continued to be retained. This trend is likely to continue if factors contributing to the practice of retention and the effects on student achievement are not examined. Eighty-one percent of the student population in the Atlanta Public Schools received free or reduced priced lunches in 1988-89 (Statistical Report, 1988-89). Student eligibility is based on the income of the parents or guardians. This status is one of the major indicators for the category "at-risk." Recent researchers such as Paulu (1987) report that at-risk students are frequently retained and become dropouts in either middle/junior high or high schools.

Findings from this study can be used to impact changes in curriculum requirements and to suggest other programs and alternative measures that might be used to improve the instructional program for students in the Atlanta Public Schools.

Definition of Terms

Retention – refers to the practice of having students remain in the same grade for two, three, or more years. The Statistical Report published by the Atlanta Board of education was used as the basis for defining this term.

Pupil Progression Plan – refers to a set of guidelines approved by the Atlanta Board of Education outlining the required skills which must be mastered by all students before advancing to the next grade level. Exceptions for handicapped students are included.

Administrative Placement – refers to the permission granted by the superintendent to advance a student who has not mastered the skills for promotion to the next level. This is usually granted when a student has been retained one or more times. Psychological testing, in some cases, indicates that the student is a slow learner and not capable of mastering skills at the required rate.

At-Risk – refers to students from low income areas. Free lunch status and lack of preschool experience are indicators of this status.

Dropout – refers to students who leave school before obtaining a high school diploma.

Self-Concept – refers to a set of self-attitudes reflecting a description and evaluation of one's behavior and attributes. The

Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was used as the basis for defining this term.

Attitude toward school – refers to the student's feelings toward his experiences in the school setting such as relationship with the teachers, students, and classroom presentations of subjects.

Cost – refers to the annual per pupil allocation provided for students' education in the Atlanta Public Schools.

Attendance – refers to the number of days students in Georgia are required to attend school. Failure to attend at least 165 days of the required 180 days is considered poor attendance.

Discipline problems – refers to the teacher's assessment of student conduct in the classroom, cafeteria, hallways, and other areas of the facility.

The Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference in the achievement gains in reading and mathematics for retained and nonretained fifth grade students?

2. Is there a significant relationship between school attendance and academic achievement in reading and mathematics?

3. Is there a significant difference in the level of self-concept of retained and nonretained fifth graders?

4. Is there a significant difference in the attitude toward school of retained and nonretained fifth graders?

5. Does the cost for educating retained students vary greatly from the cost of educating nonretained students?

6. Do retained students cause more discipline problems than nonretained students?

Summary

This chapter has presented a brief historical perspective of retention versus promotion practices and the problems which resulted from the practice of retaining students. The Atlanta Public Schools policy requirements have resulted in high retention rates at the primary level. A research study has not been conducted to examine the impact of retentions; therefore, this study has been selected for research. Terms are defined to clarify their use in this study. Finally, questions which will guide this study have been included.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature which follows focuses on four specific areas. They are the competency-based movement, the problems associated with at-risk students, the dropout problem and retention studies. This research serves as the foundation for this study.

An increase in student retention in the same grade began to show after the emergence of the competency movement which was characterized by stricter grading and promotion standards for elementary and secondary schools.

Competency-based education is defined by Nickse and McClure (1981) as an approach to education that places primary emphasis on the outcomes of learning rather than on time spent on the learning process used to achieve it. Criterion-referenced testing provides the documentation of mastery of requirements.

According to Nickse and McClure (1981), public pressure for accountability in education brought on the competency movement. Disenchantment with the school's ability to document students' results led to the demand for specification of criterion levels of performance. Funding agencies had provided huge sums of money to upgrade education and achievement gains were not indicating an increase in achievement. According to Nickse and McClure (1981),

the competency movement began in the early seventies and gained momentum in the eighties.

Strong support for the competency movement was expressed by Ebel (1980) who felt that a concerned public was disillusioned with the kind of education that was more concerned with the conditions for learning than with acquisition of knowledge and skills. Removing the threat of failure removed an important incentive to work according to Ebel. The product, not the process, is how the public judges public schools and the public no longer had confidence in schools where students never failed (Ebel, 1980).

One researcher who raised questions about the competency movement was Selden (1983). Selden predicted high failure rates among economically disadvantaged and culturally different students. His position was that changes would have to be made pedagogically for students who continued to fail competency tests. Cunningham and Owens (1976) studied the cost of unproductive citizens in the work place who had been socially promoted. Similar students referred to by Selden now face mastering required skills in order to pass from grade to grade.

Goldhammer and Weitgel writing in Competency Based Education (1981) define competency-based education according to a five step basic instructional design. They state:

> The first step is to select specific objectives to be achieved by students in advance of instruction or assessment so that all persons involved will be aware of requirements. Second, use

> diagnostic instruments to determine the specific needs of the individual, and third, use the best instructional method to meet those needs. The fourth step is competency testing to measure the student's competency against the initial objective and finally, if competency is achieved, some form of acknowledgement is given to the student (p. 51).

Goldhammer and Weitgel stated that 36 states had legislated competency testing by 1981. These tests covered minimum requirements to be tested over a 12-year period.

In a survey conducted by Neill (1978) for the American Association of School Administrator's Critical Issues Report, "The Competency Movement," five categories of concern were outlined. The concerns were: (a) Who is to be held accountable? (b) What are the logistics of implementing the requirement? (c) How will the curriculum be narrowed to include courses other than those emphasizing basic skills receiving less attention? (d) How will we meet the needs of all students? and (e) What will be the threat to local control of the curriculum and graduation requirements?

The report concluded with a listing of promotion and retention policies which had been designed in various states in response to concerns from the public.

According to the Gallup Poll published in Phi Delta Kappan (1986), the public overwhelmingly supported the competency movement. In responding to questions related to stricter

requirements for grade promotion and high school graduation, 72 percent of those polled favored stricter requirements for both.

One year after A Nation At Risk (1983) was published, 35 states had enacted increased graduation requirements, 29 states had begun statewide testing policies which established minimum competencies, 22 states introduced curriculum reform through statewide syllabi or guides, 18 states had implemented new instructional time requirements and 29 states had established academic enrichment programs including intensive summer study for students and teachers. These numbers were reported in the book, A Nation Responds, published by the United States Department of Education (1984).

The At-Risk Student

Neill (1978) noted that the competency-based movement which began as an attempt to give all students a chance to succeed, was affecting negatively the disadvantaged or at-risk student.

Lauro Cavazos, United States Secretary of Education (1989), addressed the problems of at-risk students. Citing a survey of Urban New Jersey teachers, Cavazos underscored the problems of at-risk students. Fifty-eight percent reported that students were undernourished, 54 percent said poor health was a problem and 81 percent said that neglected or abused students were a problem. According to Cavazos, 20 percent of all school-aged children are living in poverty, 20 out of every 100 are born out of wedlock, 13 of

these are born to teenage mothers, 30 into homes where parents are either unemployed or live below the poverty level.

Cavazos recommended high standards and high expectations for all students. He also advocated strengthening the curriculum, raising requirements and setting specific goals at each grade level. This can be done, he suggested, with early intervention programs such as Headstart.

Comer (1988) worked with a group of colleagues at Yale University in the New Haven, Connecticut schools for 12 years. He and his colleagues worked with students who underachieved despite adequate intellectual endowment, and who were believed to be potential underachievers as adults. The sources of the risks, he believes, are in societal conditions within the family, community and school.

Several recommendations were made to improve the education of at-risk students following the completion of their work. Two of these recommendations are relevant to this study. Comer recommended the following:

> School boards, state and local governments, and school districts must recognize that students' social development is as important as their academic ability and should support new ways of thinking. Schools must be evaluated not only on high test scores but also the ability to prepare students to assume adult responsibilities (p. 16).

After studying programs for the disadvantaged which were implemented over the last 20 years, Levin (1987) and colleagues at Stanford University concluded that students in remedial situations have no time-table or incentive to move from remedial back to the mainstream. Students are expected to progress at a slower rate and the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students grows wider. Raising standards without making it possible for disadvantaged students to meet them will more likely increase the dropout rate according to Levin.

The intervention model designed by Levin is an accelerated curriculum. The approach requires assessment of each child's performance, and periodic evaluations of progress. Reading and writing for meaning is to be stressed in all curricula areas along with peer tutoring and cooperative learning.

Schools play a significant role in promoting at-risk behaviors according to Edwards (1989). Five factors support his theory that schools are lagging in certain areas. He states:

> Inappropriately conceived learning conditions, failure to encourage the development of independent thinking patterns, failure to establish appropriate conditions for learning, operation of a competitive system that prohibits success for the majority of the student population, and failure to provide an environment in which students can become autonomous and independent are helping to promote at-risk behaviors (p. 59).

Recommendations for avoiding these impediments are first, placing learning within a cultural and tool using context with activity oriented problems. Second, developing higher level thinking skills by introducing problems within their lives and having them provide solutions. Third, teachers must accept students as they are and give them the necessary opportunities to become independent. Fourth, eliminate competition and fifth, give students autonomy.

The Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, an independent research and education organization, published Children In Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged (1987). The three strategies recommended to improve the prospects for disadvantaged children are:

1. Prevention through early intervention programs that focus on children from birth to age five and on teenagers who are most at risk of premature parenthood.

2. Restructuring the foundation of education – changes that are needed in the structure, staffing, management and financing of schools.

3. Retention and Reentry – targeted programs for health, employment and social services for students in school and for dropouts.

Black and Hispanic students are more often classified as at risk than other groups. In a research study conducted by Waxman

(1989), the students' perception of classroom instruction and how it affected academic achievement was investigated. The results indicated that there were significant differences between black and Hispanic students' perception of their teachers' instruction. Hispanics had a lower perception of classroom instruction than blacks. Several studies have found that teachers' expectations for Hispanics are generally lower than for that of other students. Therefore, he suggests that policy makers take a careful look at instruction for these students.

The Dropout Factor

The dropout issue has generated considerable public debate and resulted in passage of legislation by Congress and State legislatures to assist school systems where the dropout problem is greatest.

Paulu (1987) compiled a report for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in which urban superintendents responded to the dropout problem. Poor academic performance was cited as the single best predictor of who drops out. Students who repeat grades are more likely to leave school than those who proceed from grade to grade. Chronic discipline problems, truancy and suspension also signaled a possible dropout.

Schulz, Tales, and Rice (1987) conducted a research study in the Chicago Public School System where the dropout rates between 1978 and 1980 reached 40 percent. The purpose of the study was

to assess the association of the dropout rate with attributes of the students.

Two of the attributes considered in this research were relevant to this study. They were overage students and reading achievement of students entering high school. Students entering high school in 1978 and 1980 were the subjects for the study which indicated that the dropout rate of overage students was about 13 percentage points higher than the dropout rate of normal-age students. The overage percent in the 1978 sample was 31 percent Hispanics, 25 percent Blacks, 23 percent Asian, and 15 percent White. Reading achievement and overage were cited as the major causes for the high dropout rate among Blacks and Hispanics.

In summary, according to these researchers, retention of students in primary grades increased the dropout rate at the high school level and overage students are far more likely to drop out than students who are the right age for that grade. Overaged students must have reading scores over two grade levels higher than normal-aged students in order to have the same chance of graduating.

Grissom (1989) supported Schulz's conclusions. He contended that based on his research studies, low IQ was not a cause of students dropping out. The two characteristics he found most often shared by dropouts were (1) they are two years behind their peers in reading and mathematics skills and (2) they have been

kept back one or more years by the time they reached seventh grade.

Retention Studies

Niklason (1987) studied the effects of retention on specific subgroups of children in two Utah school districts. Niklason's reasons for questioning the practice of retentions were: (a) Retention rates vary across the country as they do in the two districts studied, (b) The practice of retention is inconsistent within the districts, (c) The evidence collected on retention since the turn of the century does not support the practice, and (d) The practice of retention is very expensive in terms of time, efforts, and financial outlay.

One hundred two children, who had been recommended for retention, were the subjects of this study. Principals promoted sixty-two students inspite of teacher recommendations and forty were retained. Eighty percent listed low academic performance as the reason for retention. Early grades in the study included kindergarten and first. Grades two through six were considered as later grades. The Wide Range Achievement Test was used to measure reading and mathematics achievement, and the California Test of Personality was used to measure growth in social and personal adjustment. The results showed that promoted students made more progress the following year than those who were retained. Younger children who were promoted in spite of a recommendation for retention maintained approximately the same

mean reading score after one year. Younger retained children showed a decline in reading scores. In grades two through six retention did not affect reading achievement. Whether promoted or retained, students in these groups showed a slight improvement.

Arithmetic scores for higher ability students increased the following year and declined for younger retained children, but did not decline for younger promoted children. Retention did not affect the arithmetic scores for students in grades two through six. The results of the personal social adjustment findings showed no significance because of retention.

Shepard and Smith (1987) studied the effects of kindergarten retention at the end of first grade in the Boulder, Colorado school district. The study addressed two questions regarding kindergarten retained children: (a) Were children more successful academically after an extra year of school? and (b) Did they feel better about themselves because they were not pushed ahead before they were ready?

The sample in this study came from four schools with the highest retention rates (16%-20%) and control schools which matched these schools in size, percent of free and reduced lunch and mean scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. There were 40 matched pairs in the study. First graders who had repeated kindergarten and were completing three years in school and first graders from low retaining schools who had not been retained were

matched according to sex, birthday, initial readiness and dominant language.

The retained and nonretained students were rated on seven outcomes. Two standardized test scores were used and five teacher ratings. Reading and mathematics achievement, social maturity, and learning school work were the areas in which teachers rated students. The reading and mathematics total scores on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (Level B, Form 5) were also used. Parents of retained and nonretained students were interviewed by a structured telephone interview. They were asked their perception of their progress in kindergarten and first grade and their child's progress and adjustment at the end of first grade.

The results of this study were:

1. Controlled and retained students were the same on CTBS Math scores and the teacher's ratings of math, reading, social maturity, learner self-concept and attention.

2. Although the retained and matched groups were below the district, they were both above national norms in reading and mathematics achievement.

3. The parent interviews did not reflect any benefits for retained students in academics or in relationships with their peers. Retained kindergarten students had poor attitudes toward school according to their parents.

This study according to the researchers found no difference between retained and nonretained students in a two-year kindergarten program. These findings support other studies done at this grade level.

Another study of retention at the first grade level was conducted by Sandoval (1984). Using six school districts in the Sacramento, Solano county area of Northern California, he attempted to answer these questions: (a) How should repeating children be characterized with respect to immaturity? (b) How do they compare with respect to measures of immaturity to classroom peers and to other children who are candidates to repeat in the winter, but are later promoted? and (c) What subgroups or types exists among those retained?

Sandoval's sample was 146 first graders. Eighty-four (57.5%) of this group were retained and 62 (42.5%) were promoted. The retention of a student was based upon the judgement of the classroom teacher, the discretion of the school principal and parental consent. The average age of the students was six years, nine months. About 25 percent were Black or Hispanic.

Among the measures used to collect data were the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, three Piaget devised tests of cognitive development, subtests from the California Achievement Tests and the Pupil Behavior Rating Scale which measures classroom adaptation.

Both groups (retained and promoted) were below average in word recognition and reading comprehension. Both were of average height and weight and both in the average range of intelligence. They were less well adjusted as measured by the PBRS. Students who were retained exhibited problems in academic skills, visual motor integration and adaptation to classroom demands according to the tests administered. The results showed no differences in the groups who were eventually retained and promoted in terms of size, self-concept, IQ, social skills or age. Parents played an important role in the decision process. The author concluded that students do not fit a mold and that retention is a crude intervention.

The transition room concept was investigated by Gredler (1984). Transition rooms are used for students considered unready for the regular first grade program. Extra time is needed for these students, and they should be separated from the regular classroom is the argument for this concept. Gredler reviewed research by recent authors to arrive at conclusions about this practice. Bell, as cited in Gredler's study, investigated the concept in Detroit's suburban schools comparing achievement of students who were placed in the transition class and those who were identified as at risk, but were placed in the regular first grade class. She found that the children placed in the first grade class made greater gains than those in the readiness room.

Bell tested this same group at the end of the second year of school using the Stanford Achievement Test. Again the children

eligible for the transition class, but who did not attend, performed at a satisfactory level. Bell questioned the proponents of the transition class based on her two-year study of the concept. Her study also looked at self-concept. Comparisons of the results indicated that there was a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence compared with the students who were mainstreamed to the regular class.

Leinhart (1972) studied transition programs in the Pittsburg Public Schools where the population was predominantly black. Transition room eligible students were placed in a regular first grade class, divided into two groups and taught with different reading strategies. One group was taught using an individualized reading program and the other used the regular basal program. Students in the transition class also used the individualized program. Students in the regular class using the individualized program out performed both groups. Leinhart attributes this to the special materials and placement in the regular program. Some other factors revealed as a result of this study were:

1. There was less reading instruction in the transition classes than in regular classes:
2. Fewer reading lessons were covered in the transitional classes.
3. Testing for mastery of lessons was not done at all in transitional classes, while regular class students were tested 15 times.

4. Adult/student ratio in transition classes was three times higher than in regular classes.

Two possible conclusions highlighted by this study are that the programs in transition classes are not challenging enough and negative expectation of school personnel hinders the program.

The Association of School Curriculum Developers (ASCD) appointed a task force to study the issue of retention versus social promotion. Johnson (1984) compiled the study for the commission. Several prestigious national reports supported abolishing the practice of social promotion. The National Committee on Excellence in Education stated:

> Placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs rather than by rigid adherence to age (p. 67).

The National Science Board stated:

> Every state should establish rigorous standards for high school graduation and local school districts should provide rigorous standards for grade promotion. We should curtail the process of social promotion (p. 67).

Gallup stated:

> Promotion from grade-to-grade based on examination and not social promotion is favored by a substantial majority (75%) of

survey respondents. This view is shared by parents of school children and by those who have no children in school (p. 68).

Jackson (1975) cited a recent study by McAfee who questioned using commercially or locally developed tests to retain students. McAfee raised concern about the following issues:

1. The implications of setting standards so low they become a public mockery
2. Relating criterion to normal intelligence
3. Setting promotion standards according to national norms.

McAfee recommended the following to school leaders: (a) sequence skills according to a hierarchy so students will attain terminal objectives, (b) determine the developmental level of cognitive abilities of students at various levels of instruction, and (c) set standards of retention that will result in a percentage of failure with which a given community can live.

Jackson (1975), a member of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, conducted an extensive review of research studies on grade retention. He was prompted to do so after examining unpublished data collected by the Elementary and Secondary School Surveys for the Office of Civil Rights. An estimated 1,007,539 elementary and secondary students were retained in the 1971-72 school year. The estimated cost to the nation for this year was approximately nine hundred million dollars.

Jackson had serious concerns about the designs used in the research studies. Very few experimental models were used, which according to Jackson, is a higher research design model.

Jackson's general conclusion of this review was that there was no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion for students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties. He further stated that educators who retain pupils in a grade do so without valid research evidence to indicate that such treatment will provide greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than will promotion to the next grade.

Ebey (1981) conducted a study to compare the achievement levels of low achieving fifth grade students who had experienced retention, with low achieving fifth grade students who had not experienced retention. Reading and mathematics were the academic areas used in the study. Retention for these students had occurred in either the kindergarten, first, or second grade. The scores on the subtests in reading and mathematics on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests were used for the study. Two of the findings which are relevant to this study were:

> Low achieving retained students cannot be expected to attain scores that are comparable with low achieving passed students on the Total Reading Subtest of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and low achieving retained students may be expected to achieve at comparable levels with low achieving passed

students on the Mathematics Subtest of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (p. 42).

Gerstel (1981) studied one school district's promotion policy and its effect on reading achievement and the social and emotional development of students. The population for the study included students in grades 2 through 6. The findings which are relevant to this study were:

1. There are significant differences in the reading growth of retained and nonretained students across the grade levels 2 through 6.

2. There was no significant difference in the self-concept of retained students at the third grade level as compared to their peers who were promoted to grade 4.

3. There was a significant difference in the self-concept of fourth graders judged by their teachers to be vulnerable to retention and fourth graders judged to meet the criteria for promotion.

The effects of retention in kindergarten and later school achievement and self-concept was the subject of a study by Stapleford (1983). The major findings of the study were (1) the self-concept did not decrease after a second year in kindergarten and (2) students who repeated first grade were ones who had been recommended to repeat kindergarten but were not retained. The researcher recommended that kindergarten be considered as the

most appropriate level at which to recommend a second year in the same grade.

Finlayson (1977) studied the effect of school failure on the student's self-concept. Finlayson's concern was that the stricter standards imposed as a result of the competency-based education movement would result in more failures and failure might damage the student's self-esteem and future achievement. His two-year study of retention and self-concept was conducted using first graders who were just beginning school and followed them through the second year. This study compared 75 regularly promoted students, nonpromoted students, and promoted borderline students who showed the same characteristics as the nonpromoted students. The results of the study showed nonpromotion did not create self-concept problems. All groups showed an increase in self-concept during the first year and during the second year the self-concept of nonpromoted students continued to rise.

Summary

In summary, research supports the following facts:

1. Retention does not increase learning. Pupils who ordinarily would be retained and are promoted tend to achieve more in the next grade, than do students with similar ability who are retained.

2. Socialization and maturity are not increased by retention. Students who are left in the grade with younger children will choose companions from the grade ahead.

3. Retention does not provide homogeneity. The range of abilities in a class are not reduced to allow teachers fewer groups with which to contend.

4. Motivation is not increased. Retention has been identified as one of the major factors in the dropout rate. Rather than inspiring students it tends to discourage aspirations.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examined the effects that retention in the same grade had on gains in achievement in reading and mathematics for fifth grade students in a large urban school system. The study was conducted by an examination of identified variables, operational definitions and projected relationships among the variables. Conceptual support for the interlinkage of the variables will be discussed in this chapter and hypotheses for the study will be stated.

The basic assumption of this study was that retention in the same grade negatively affects the achievement gains of students in the areas of reading and mathematics. The difference between self-concept and achievement and the difference between attitude toward school were investigated. The relationship between attendance and achievement in mathematics was also explored. Two other variables studied were cost and discipline. The difference in the cost for educating retained and nonretained students will be calculated and reported. The effects of discipline in the classroom and other areas of the school will be reported using responses from the researcher's questionnaire. The survey designed by Blasingame (1990) was given to teachers and administrators eliciting opinions regarding several practices and beliefs associated with retention of students.

Definition of Variables

1. **Retention** – refers to the practice of having a student remain in the same grade one or more times and for this study as defined in the Pupil Progression Handbook.

2. **Self-Concept** – refers to the child's value and judgement of his own goodness, badness and self-worth as measured by the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale.

3. **Attitude toward school** – refers to the outlook students have toward school activities, the curriculum and school personnel as measured by the Quality of School Life Scale.

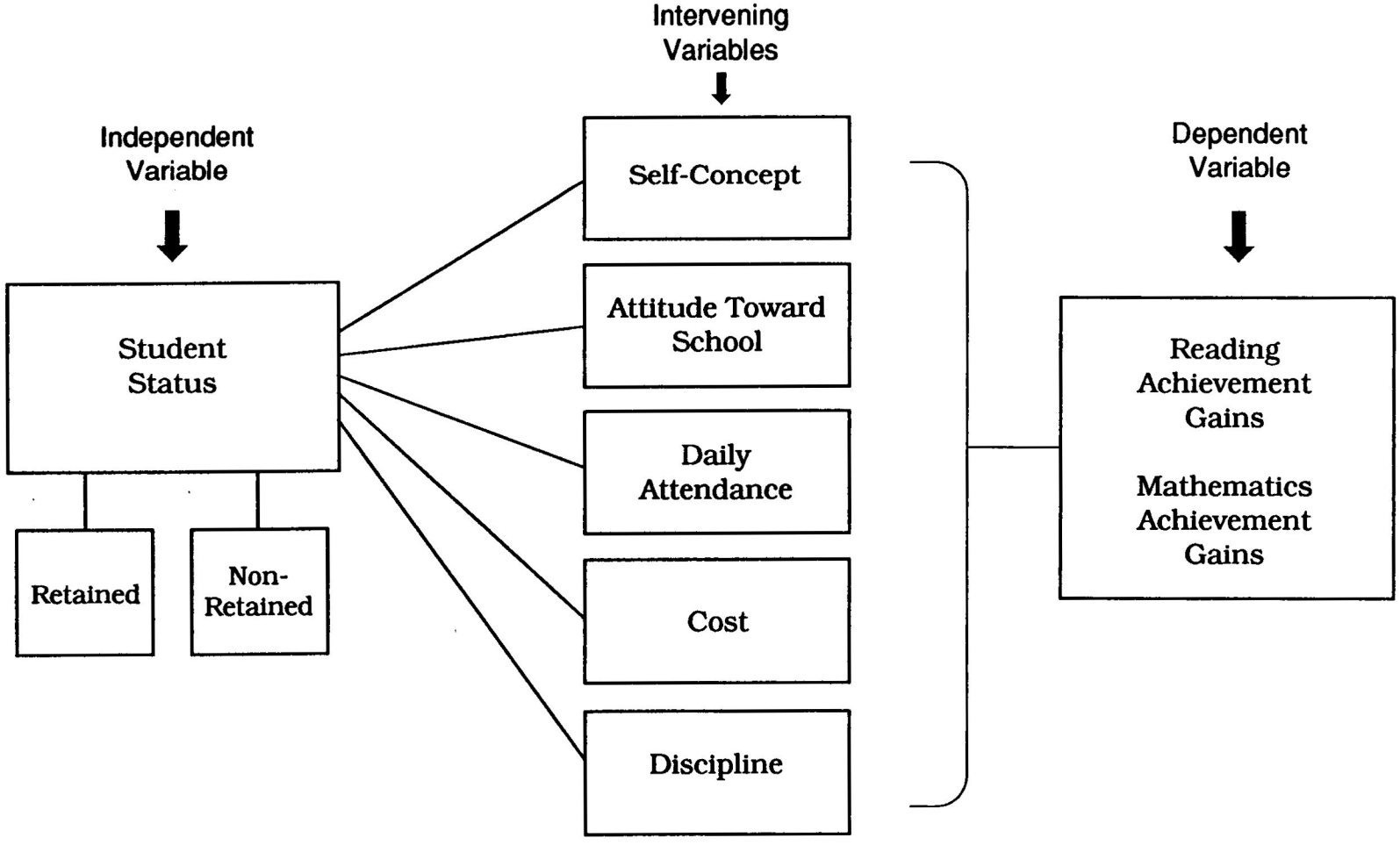
4. **Attendance** – refers to the number of days attended by the student out of the one hundred eighty days required by the State Board of Education of Georgia and for this study the end-of-year statistical student attendance report.

5. **Discipline** – refers to the self-control exhibited by students in the classroom and in other school areas such as hallways, cafeteria and playground as measured by the questionnaire designed by B. J. Blasingame, researcher for this study.

A conceptualization of the framework for this study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY



Projected Relationship of the Variables

The continuing debate on retention began in the twentieth century after changes in the organizational pattern of schools occurred. Graded schools followed the urbanization and industrialization of society. This was the beginning of students being grouped by age, starting at age 5 in kindergarten and progressing annually until they finished grade 12 according to Selden, Encyclopedia of Education Research (1982). The twentieth century school was also compulsory and the combination of graded and compulsory attendance caused students to remain in school regardless of achievement. Selden cited information from the Center of Educational Statistics which showed a steady increase in the number of fifth graders graduated by elementary schools and who later graduated from high school. This group selected the fifth grade because the figures at this grade level reflected early retentions and inflated the numbers at this level. According to the data from this group, 30 percent of the fifth graders entering high school in 1924 completed their work and 75 percent of fifth graders entering in 1969 finished in 1977. Selden concluded that the 70 and 25 percent not completing high school had dropped out. Research data reported in this study suggested that retention in earlier grades was a good predictor for students dropping out of school later.

Promotion and nonpromotion decisions have been based on three general policies (Selden 1982). They are:

1. Grade Standard wherein the curriculum is interpreted as a series of graded activities with promotion based on successful completion of the activities at each grade level.

2. Continuous promotion which moves students forward based exclusively on chronological age. This policy has become known as social promotion and is the most controversial.

3. Continuous progress wherein academic, social, psychological and physical development are considered in the promotional decision. The nongraded school, individualized instruction, individually guided instruction and individually prescribed instruction were organizational patterns used in response to this policy.

The trend toward stricter promotional policies was addressed by Shepherd and Smith (1987). These authors questioned the assumption of the existence of a set body of skills and content which when mastered the student would have attained an ideal level of competence. They further questioned the practice of recycling students, who had failed to achieve competence at a given level, through the same standard curriculum after which it was assumed that grade level competence had been attained. The percent of retention has been highest when a grade standard policy is in effect.

Studies of promotion have paralleled these policies. Goodlad (1954) questioned the graded school concept where children of the same age, but varying in ability, are given equal number of years of schooling which supposedly guides them to function to the best of

their ability throughout the time they are enrolled in school. The studies of Goodlad on nonpromotion suggested a cyclical relationship between school failure, discouragement, decrease of interest in school work, aggressive and attention getting behavior and delinquent acts.

Holmes and Matthews (1984) completed a meta-analysis of the effect of nonpromotion and determined that when all areas of effect (academic, achievement, personal adjustment, self-concept, attitude toward school and attendance) were included, the literature indicated that the retained pupils scored .37 standard deviation units lower than nonretained pupils on outcome measures.

Several other studies have supported the findings of Goodlad, Holmes and Matthews (1984). Ebey (1981), Finalyson (1977), Jackson (1975), Nicklason (1987), Sandoval (1984), Shepard and Smith (1987) all concur that nonpromotion has negative effects on students' achievement.

Self-concept as a correlate to nonpromotion has been studied for many years. Negative traits are generally found to exist in the retained students; however, researchers cannot conclude whether the negative behavior brought on the retention or student who had been retained developed undesirable traits in response to his position (Finlayson, 1977; Norton, 1983; Selden, 1982).

The students' attitude toward school and learning as a result of retention has not been extensively explored; however, according

to Goodlad (1963), there is psychological evidence showing that failure is a deterrent to the development of sound attitudes.

Discipline problems caused by retained students are frequently tied to examinations of self-concept and attitude toward school in studies. Miller, Frazier, and Richey, (1980) found that teachers tended to believe that retention promoted behavior problems.

The school plays a crucial role in the total development of the child; therefore, a decision to retain a child must be made carefully to avoid impeding the child's total development.

Repeating a grade can be costly to taxpayers. In 1971 almost one billion dollars had been spent by the federal government because of the high retention rate across the nation (Jackson, 1975). An article in the Education Letter published by the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1986) suggests that having a student repeat a grade costs about $3,500.

Similar studies by the Carnegie Foundation (1988) and the Committee for Economic Development (1987) have focused on the need for the educational community to upgrade its curriculum. The results have caused state legislatures to mandate stricter curriculum requirements and testing programs to support improved achievement. Overwhelming evidence from researchers against nonpromotion has not changed the focus of governmental bodies.

The retention policy in the school system where the study was conducted was implemented as planned. The effectiveness of

retention on fifth grade students was determined using the variables described in this chapter.

The Null Hypotheses for this study follow:

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses raised in this study are:

H_1 There is no significant difference in the achievement gains in reading for retained and nonretained students.

H_2 There is no significant difference in the achievement gains in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

H_3 There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in reading for retained and nonretained students.

H_4 There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

H_5 There is no significant difference in the level of self-concept of retained and nonretained students.

H_6 There is no significant difference in the attitude exhibited toward school by retained and nonretained students.

Two of the questions which guided this study will be examined and reported in Chapter V. They are: (1) Does the cost for educating retained students vary greatly from the cost of educating nonretained students? and (2) Do retained students cause more discipline problems than nonretained students?

Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework used for this study. The null hypotheses have been stated. Two of the research questions which guided this study were also stated. These questions will be examined and reported.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will include research procedures used in the following categories: Type of Study, Description of the Retention Policy, Population, Instrumentation and Data Analysis.

Type of Study

The descriptive research method was used to collect and organize the data for this study. The purpose of descriptive research according to Isaac (1977) is to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest factually and accurately. A report and analysis of test score results in a school district is an example of this type of research. Surveys are also used to collect data for a descriptive study and results used to make comparisons, evaluations, and suggestions for future decision by administrators.

This study was conducted in two phases. Phase one was conducted using a sample of schools from each geographical area of a large urban school system. Standardized test scores as it related to retention and promotion was used in this phase.

Two schools within the same urban school system were in the second phase of the study. This phase was essentially a case study.

Description of the Retention Policy

Guidelines for promotion in the school system examined in this study became effective in 1981. The guidelines are published in The Pupil Progression Plan (1986). The intent of the Progression Plan as stated in the 1986 publication was as follows:

> Implement Board policy and establish procedures which are to be followed in providing each student with the maximum opportunity to succeed in school.

However, students who do not master a specified number of skills at a given grade level are retained until mastery of all required skills are documented. Therefore, retention percentages have increased since policy guidelines have been implemented. The policy handbook outlines procedures for documentation of minimum skill mastery in reading and mathematics for grades kindergarten through eighth. The number of required skills in these two subject areas vary at each grade level. Further, the handbook includes services that will be provided to retainees if resources are available. Specific steps to be followed by administrators to inform parents of a child's progress are included along with the appeals process (see Appendix Q).

The policy was phased in over an eight year period. As an additional grade level was added, teachers of that level received instructions in the process for implementation. Follow-up assistance was provided by the on-site administrator and the resource teacher assigned to each school. The number of students

retained is reported in an annual statistical report published by the school system.

Population

The population for the first phase of the study was selected from the three geographical areas in the school system—Area I, Area II, and Area III. These schools were selected based on size, achievement, and socio-economic factors. Information was obtained from the 1989-90 Chapter I proposal. The total population of the fifth grade classes in the six schools selected was 391.

In the second phase of the research, two additional schools were selected to study in more detail. The two were selected because they exhibited characteristics of at-risk conditions as described in the supporting literature. Many of the students who are retained have characteristics attributed to at-risk students. Both schools are located in low socio-economic areas as defined by the number of students who receive free and reduced priced breakfast and lunch.

Phase two schools exhibit similar characteristics in several areas. School A has an enrollment of 523 students with 221 students enrolled in remedial programs (Chapter I, REP). The pupil-teacher ratio is 21.6 and the percent of pupil attendance is 93.9. A mobility index of .37 was recorded in 1988-89 for School A. This refers to the number of students withdrawing and entering during the school year.

In School B, the student enrollment is 541 with 203 students enrolled in remedial programs. The pupil-teacher ratio is 22.7 and the percent of student attendance was 92.3 for the 1988-89 school year. The mobility index for School B is .35. This information was recorded in the 1988-89 School Reports compiled and published by the Research and Evaluation Department of the Atlanta Public Schools (1989). The information is summarized in the table which follows.

Table 1

General Characteristics of Schools Used in Case Study

	Total Enrollment	Enrollment Remedial Program	Mobility Index	Pupil Percent Attendance	Pupil Teacher Ratio
School A	523	221	.37	93.9	21.6
School B	541	203	.35	92.3	22.7

School A derives its school population from three apartment complexes and a small number of deteriorating single family homes. The apartment complexes are all subsidized by Federal Housing Funds. All housing is within a one-mile radius of the school and students are not furnished bus services.

School B draws its entire population from a large housing project which is also federally funded. All students are in walking distance of the school.

The differences in the two schools are minimal. A detailed study in self-concept and attitude toward school was done in the two schools. The variable of attendance was also examined using data from these schools. Also studied were the cost incurred by retaining students and discipline problems created by retained overaged students.

Instrumentation

The NCE (Normal Curve Equivalent) scores on the subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were used to measure student achievement in reading and mathematics in the first phase of the study. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills is used to compare student achievement against the norm population. Statistical tests calculated using the normal curve equivalent meet the assumption of normality and equal interval performance scales. It is used to assign students to Remedial Education Program (REP) classes and Chapter I classes. REP is a state mandated program under the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE, 1985) which requires that students scoring below a specified level be given additional instruction during the school day.

The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (1984) was used to measure the self-concept of fifth graders in the case study phase. The 80-item self-report questionnaire is designed to assess how

children and adolescents feel about themselves. Six clusters are addressed by the test. They are: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, happiness and satisfaction. This test is published by Western Psychological Services and used frequently by psychologists in the Atlanta Public School System (see Appendix O) for reliability information.

The Quality of School Life Scale is a 27-item instrument which asks students to provide a description of their school and give personal reactions to their schooling experience. This instrument was designed to be used with students in grades 4-12. Tryout data was collected on fifth graders. Data on reliability and validity based on the research norms sample indicated internal consistency reliabilities ranging from .64 to .89 for three subscales and from .86 to .90 for the total scale. This indicated a fairly high level of internal consistency (Burros Mental Measurement Yearbook, 1985).

Teachers and administrators were asked to give their opinions about retention by responding to a Pupil Policy Survey developed by the researcher, Betty Blasingame (1990) [see Appendix F]. Members of the researcher's committee evaluated the instrument for face validity. The questionnaire contained 20 statements requiring a "yes," "no," or "unsure" response. Some items on the questionnaire refer specifically to retention guidelines of the school system from which the student population was taken. All kindergarten through fifth grade teachers in the two case study

schools were asked to respond to the instrument. Responses were also received from the administrators in the two schools.

Data Analysis

The differences in gains in achievement in reading and mathematics of promoted and nonpromoted students were analyzed using the T-test statistical tool. The subtests of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in reading and mathematics were analyzed for statistical differences. The level of significance was set at P = .05.

To analyze the frequency of responses of promoted and nonpromoted students on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and the Quality of School Life Scale, the Chi Square statistical tool was employed. The level of significance was set at P = .05.

Responses to the questionnaire administered to teachers and administrators will be summarized and reported in percentages.

The relationship between attendance and achievement was examined using a random sampling of students from the fifth grade classes in the case study schools. Eighty nonretained students and 40 previously retained students were selected from the total fifth grade population. The students were randomly selected using the 1990 cumulative attendance report and the 1990 ITBS spring score report. The Pearson Correlation (r) was used to calculate the relationship between attendance and reading achievement and attendance and mathematics achievement.

The question of discipline of retained students was addressed on the teacher/administrator survey. The results will be reported in percentages and discussed.

A comparison of the cost for educating promoted and retained fifth graders in the two case study schools will be reported and summarized in percentages.

Limitations of the Study

The fifth grade is the terminal grade in the elementary schools in this study. Reports of retention rates covering the period 1981-89 indicate that retentions decrease sharply at grades 4 and 5 and begin to increase when students enroll in middle schools. The cause for this decline was not examined.

In order to analyze the data on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept and Quality of School Life Scales instruments, which were administered to fifth graders, some method of identification had to be used. Each questionnaire was color coded to identify retainees, and this could have created some anxiety in students and affected their responses.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the design of the study, a description of the policy, the population, instruments used to collect data, and limitations of the study. These instruments were used to test the null hypotheses and research questions posed in this study. An analysis of the data is reported in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the data used for this study by addressing the hypotheses and research questions. Spring test results from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) were used to define achievement. Using the T-test statistical tool, differences in achievement gains were computed for students who had been retained and those who had not been retained prior to grade 5. Achievement gains from grades 2 through 5 are reported.

To assess the students' feeling of self-concept, the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was administered. The differences in responses of retained and nonretained students were analyzed using Chi Square.

A twenty-four item survey, the Quality of School Life Scale, was administered to students to assess their attitude toward school. The differences in responses from retained and nonretained students were analyzed using Chi Square.

The relationship between attendance and achievement was studied using the number of days present in 1989-90 and the spring ITBS test scores for 1990 in reading and mathematics. Pearson r was used to calculate the relationship.

Using the per pupil expenditure for each year the students had attended school, the approximate additional cost incurred by retention was determined and reported.

Teachers' and administrators' views on various aspects of retention and the implementation of a local policy were voiced in a survey prepared by the researcher. The responses were compiled and reported in percentages.

Hypothesis I

There is no significant difference in the achievement gains for retained and nonretained students in reading.

Both groups improved in achievement at some grade level from first through fifth. The nonretained students showed increased achievement from grade 1 to 2 with the mean scale score increasing from 33.9 to 39.9.

For the same year the nonretainees mean scores improved from 52.2 to 56.0 for the same grades. In third grade, the retained groups' achievement increased from 39.9 to 40.5 while the nonretained experienced a loss. The mean scores for the nonretained group dropped from 56.0 to 45.8. In the fourth grade, the retained group's achievement decreased while the nonretained group's achievement increased. Both groups mean scores showed an increase from grade 4 to grade 5. Even though both groups showed improvement in achievement during three of their years in

elementary school, the achievement of the nonretained group was significantly higher than that of the nonretained group at each testing period.

In grade 3 the mean scores show that the rate of gain decreased for both the retained and the nonretained groups. The mean gain score for the retainees decreased from 5.74 to 0.66 while the nonretained group's mean gain score decreased from 3.74 to a -10.17. The retained group showed a negative gain in 1989 at grade 4 of -2.10. From grade 4 to grade 5 both groups showed a positive gain. Gains in reading were computed for four years for this group of students. The null hypothesis is rejected for the third grade (1988). There was no significant difference in gains in grade 2 (1987), grade 4 (1989), and grade 5 (1990). The null hypothesis is accepted for these years.

The data with respect to Hypothesis I are displayed in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups in Reading Achievement

(Normal Curve Equivalent)

		Retained (N=88)		Non-Retained (N=303)			
Grade		Gain	S.D.	Gain	S.D.	T Value	Significance
5	1990	40.2	19.7	49.3	16.7	4.30	.00
4	1989	38.4	16.5	47.2	17.1	4.27	.00
3	1988	40.5	12.4	45.8	14.5	3.09	.00
2	1987	39.9	17.8	56.0	17.3	7.63	.00
1	1986	33.9	15.0	52.2	16.3	9.39	.00

Table 3

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups in Reading Gain

(Normal Curve Equivalent)

		Retained (N=88)		Non-Retained (N=303)			
Grade	Year	Gain	S.D.	Gain	S.D.	T Value	Significance
5	1990	1.81	20.2	2.10	16.6	0.14	0.90
4	1989	2.10	18.7	1.41	16.6	1.69	0.12
3	1988	0.66	19.7	-10.17	18.1	-4.85	0.00
2	1987	5.75	24.8	3.75	17.7	-.084	0.48

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the achievement gains in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

The retained and nonretained groups' achievement scores fluctuated from grades 1 through 5. At grade 3, the scores decrease for both groups, but the loss was greater for the nonretained where

the mean scale scores decreased from 70.05 to 48.24. From grade 2 to 3 the rate of achievement is about the same for the retained group, but the nonretainees show an increase from 48.24 to 52.36. Both groups experienced a loss in achievement from grade 4 to grade 5. There is a significant difference in achievement at every grade level for the retained and nonretained groups. The achievement of nonretained students was higher each year than the retained group. Even though a substantial decrease was recorded in grade 3 for the nonretained, the achievement level remained higher than the retained group. This suggests that retention is not making much difference. Nonretainees do better each year.

There was a significant difference in mathematics gain at each grade level through grade 4. Both groups showed a negative gain at grade 3. The mean gain score for the retained group was -2.00 and for the nonretained, -21.81. In grade 4 the retained group's mean score was 0.37 then dropped to 0.66 in grade 5. The nonretained group's mean score in grade 4 was 4.12 and dropped to -10.17 in grade 5. There was a significant difference in the rate of gain between the retained and nonretained students for each year. The gain was greater for the nonretained students at each grade level except one. The null hypothesis is rejected.

The data with respect to hypothesis 2 are displayed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups in Mathematics Achievement

(Normal Curve Equivalent)

		Retained (N=88)		Non-Retained (N=303)			
Grade	Year	Gain	S.D.	Gain	S.D.	T Value	Significance
5	1990	40.2	18.4	49.8	18.8	4.22	0.00
4	1989	44.6	16.7	52.4	17.9	3.62	0.00
3	1988	44.3	16.2	48.2	18.7	1.81	0.05
2	1987	46.3	24.8	70.0	18.9	8.33	0.00
1	1986	41.7	17.8	60.1	19.0	8.24	0.00

Table 5

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups in Mathematics Gain

(Normal Curve Equivalent)

		Retained (N=88)		Non-Retained (N=303)			
Grade	Year	Gain	S.D.	Gain	S.D.	T Value	Significance
5	1990	0.66	19.7	-10.2	18.1	-4.85	0.00
4	1989	0.37	19.4	4.12	18.2	1.67	0.10
3	1988	2.00	27.4	-21.8	20.7	-7.32	0.00
2	1987	2.80	28.2	9.94	19.4	2.67	0.01

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in reading for retained and nonretained students.

The retained students attended school an average of 171 days out of 180 required days. The mean score in reading for this group

was 29.4. Pearson r was .194 showing no relationship between attendance and reading achievement at the .05 level.

The nonretained group attended an average of 172 days out of 180 required. The mean reading score for the group was 59.5. Pearson r was .245 with a critical value of .232 at the point .05 level of significance for 78 degrees of freedom. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between school attendance and reading achievement for nonretained students. The null hypothesis is not accepted.

The data with respect to hypothesis 3 are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Correlation Between Student Achievement in Reading and Attendance

Retained - N=40		Non-Retained - N=80	
Days present	Mean = 171.2 S.D. 9.50	Number days present	Mean = 172.4 S.D. 8.25
Reading NCE Score	Mean 29.4 S.D. 18.3	Reading NCE Score	Mean 59.5 S. D. 21.8
Pearson r =	.194	Pearson r = .	245
D.F.	38	D. F.	78
Coefficient of Det.	.038	Coefficient of Det.	.060
		Critical Value	.232

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

The calculated relationship between attendance and academic achievement in mathematics shows that the retained group attended school an average of 171 days out of a required 180 school days. The mean score for this group on the mathematics test was 31.5. Pearson r for this group was .271 with 38 degrees of freedom. There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in mathematics for the retained group.

The nonretained students attended an average of 172 days of of the 180 required days. The mean score on the spring test was 49. Pearson r is .153 with degrees of freedom at 78. The relationship between attendance and achievement in mathematics is not significant. The null hypothesis is accepted.

The data with respect to hypothesis 4 are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Correlation Between Student Achievement in Mathematics and Attendance

Retained - N=40		Non-Retained - N=80	
Days present	Means = 171.3	Days present	Means 172.4
	S.D. 9.50		S.D. 8.25
Math NCE Score	Mean = 31.5	Math NCE Score	Mean 49.1
	S.D. 20.2		S.D. 24.6
Pearson r =	.271	Pearson r =	.153
D.F.	38	D.F.	78
Coefficient of Det.	.074	Coefficient of Det.	.024

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the level of self-concept of retained and nonretained students.

The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was used to collect data for this area of the study. The responses were calculated for significance using Chi Square. Students were asked to respond to 80 items. The items are reported in the six clusters established by the authors. Only four of the items were found to show a significant difference.

Students who had not been retained tended to worry more about taking tests. Among nonretained students, 73 percent responded positively to this statement, but only 52 percent of the retained students responded positively. Chi square was 7.23 with a significant of 0.01 at the .05 level. Another item asked if classmates liked their ideas; this item received a greater percent of positive responses from the retained students. Sixty-one percent of the retained students felt that classmates liked their ideas and 43 percent of the nonretained felt that their ideas were liked. Chi square for the responses was 4.46 with a level of significance at the .05 level of 0.04. Retained students were not as positive as nonretained students when asked if their classmates made fun of them. The percent of positive responses was 33 percent for retained and 51 percent for nonretained. Chi square calculation was 4.46 with a significance of 0.03 at the point .05 level.

The null hypothesis is rejected for these four items. The data are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups in Response to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Percentage of Yes Response

Item	Groups: Retained (N=58)	Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Signifi-cance
10. I get worried when we have a test.	51.7	73.3	7.23	0.01
15. I am strong.	94.8	79.3	6.00	0.01
49. My class in school think I have good ideas.	61.4	43.3	4.35	0.04
1. My classmates make fun of me.	32.8	50.8	4.46	0.03

Further analysis of this data was determined by calculating the differences in the responses of the retained and nonretained groups on each cluster. A significant difference was found in the cluster, Physical Appearance and Attributes. The mean score for retained students was 1.22 with a standard deviation of 0.18. The mean

score for the nonretained students was 1.28 with a standard deviation of 0.21. The + value is 0.83 at 177 degrees of freedom with a significance of .04 at the point .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is accepted for this cluster. The data are displayed in Table 9. The analysis of data for each cluster can be found in Appendices G through L.

Table 9

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Students on Six Clusters of Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster	Retained (N = 58) Mean	S.D.	Nonretained (N = 121) Mean	S.D.	T	D.F.	Signifi-gance
Behavior	1.24	.19	1.28	.18	1.39	177	.17
Intellectual and School Status	1.34	0.21	1.36	0.19	0.83	177	0.41
Physical Appear-ance and Attributes	1.22	0.18	1.28	0.21	2.06	177	.04
Anxiety	1.32	0.23	1.35	0.21	0.82	177	.41
Popularity	1.34	0.21	1.40	0.23	1.84	177	0.07
Happiness and Satisfaction	1.19	0.18	1.16	0.19	0.83	177	.41

Hypothesis 6

There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of retained and nonretained students.

The analysis of data which follows is in response to items on the Quality of School Life Scale (Appendix P). The scale required responses to 27 items. All items were analyzed used Chi square. The 13 items summarized in Table 10 were not significant at the .05 level of significance. The responses were given by circling true or false. All items dealt with either the teacher or conditions within the classroom. The analysis does not indicate any significant difference between the responses of retained and nonretained students.

The null hypothesis is accepted for these responses regarding attitude toward school.

Table 10

Responses to the Quality of School Life Scale

(Items 1-11, 13, 14)

Item	Chi Square	Significance
1. Liking class	0.15	0.70
2. Liking teacher	0.65	0.42
3. Eager to attend school	0.09	0.76
4. Independence at school	1.83	0.18
5. Exciting class activities	0.63	0.43
6. Teacher vs. student being right	0.00	0.96
7. Happy being at school	0.01	0.92
8. Teacher listens to students	1.30	0.25
9. Daydream in class	3.07	0.08
10. Teacher has favorites	0.08	0.78
11. Likes school	0.95	0.33
13. Interested in topics studied	1.54	0.22
14. Free to ask questions	0.15	0.70

Item 12 asked students how they felt about their teachers. Nonretained students responded more positively to items eliciting their feelings about teachers. Of the nonretained students, 66.7

percent had a positive response to item 12 while 65.5 percent of the retained responded negatively. Chi square value for this item was 14.27 with a significance of 0.00. At the .05 level, this is significant.

Table 11 displays this data. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11

Liking of Teachers

(Item 12)

	Percent of Student Responses		
STATUS	True	False	Row Total
Retained	19 34.5 20.0	36 65.5 48.6	55 32.5
Non-Retained	76 66.7 80.0	38 33.3 51.4	114 67.5
Total	95 56.2	74 43.8	
Chi Square	D.F.		Significance
14.27425	1		0.00

The responses to item 18 show that 50 percent of nonretained students liked all their teachers compared to 22 percent of the retained students. Over 50 percent of the retained students indicated liking half of their teachers. Chi square for this item was 44.16 with a significance of 0.00 at the .05 level.

The null hypothesis is rejected. The data for item 18 are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

Liking of Teachers

(Items 18)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	All	Most	Half	1-2	Total
STATUS					
		12	9	30	4
Retained	21.8	16.4	54.5	7.3	30.7
		57	19	11	16
Non-Retained	50.4	16.8	9.7	14.2	67.3

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
44.16	4	0.00

A greater percentage of the nonretained groups indicated that schoolwork was important than of the retained group. On item 20, the percent of nonretainees who felt work was very important was 60.2 percent. Of the retained group 31.5 felt that it was very important. On item 22 in the nonretained group, 42.0 percent felt that the work done in class was great but 24.5 of the retained group

felt that it was great. At the .05 level of significance, both of these items were significant.

The null hypothesis is rejected. The data are displayed in Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13

Importance of School Work

(Item 20)

	Percent of Student Responses			
STATUS	Not at All	Not Too	Pretty Imp.	Very
Retained	1 1.9	24 44.4	12 22.2	17 31.5
Non-Retained	6 5.3	13 11.5	26 23.0	68 60.2
Total	7 4.2	37 22.2	38 22.8	85 50.0

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
44.16	4	0.00

Table 14

Importance of School Work

(Item 22)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Great Stuff	Good Staff	OK	Dull	Trash
STATUS					
	13	19	21		
Retained	24.5	35.8	39.6		
	47	16	32	10	7
Non-Retained	42.0	14.3	28.6	8.9	6.3
	60	35	53	10	7
Total	36.4	21.2	32.1	6.1	4.2

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
20.31	4	0.00

Items 21 and 26 elicited responses in regard to the teacher/student relationship. Nonretained students felt that they and their teachers were both on the same wave length and on the same planet. A small percentage felt strongly that they were on the same planet. Chi square for the item was 21.1 and the level of significance was 0.00. In item 26, the students were asked if they could go to teachers when things were on their mind. Nonretained

student responses fell mainly into the "always" and "sometimes" categories with 38.7 and 26.1 percent responses, respectively. Responses from the retained group were recorded primarily in the "sometimes to seldom" category with 54.9 and 19.6 percent of responses in the two categories. Chi square for the responses was 28.1 with a significance of 0.00 at the .05 level.

The null hypothesis is rejected. Tables 15 and 16 display the data for these two items.

Table 15

Teacher-Student Relationship

(Item 21)

	Percent of Student Responses			
	Same Wave Length	Same Planet	Somewhere Solar Sep.	Two Diff. Worlds
STATUS				
Retained	5 9.6	35 67.3	10 19.2	2 3.8
Non-Retained	39 35.1	39 35.1	16 14.4	17 15.3
Total	44 27.0	74 45.4	26 16.0	19 11.7

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
21.13	3	0.00

Table 16

Teacher-Student Relationship

(Item 26)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
STATUS					
	10	23	22		
Retained	18.2	41.8	40.0		
	37	16	52	5	2
Non-Retained	33.3	13.5	46.8	4.5	1.8
	47	38	74	5	2
Total	28.3	22.9	44.6	3.0	1.2

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
19.71	4	0.00

Items 17 and 23 elicited responses concerning courses and classroom assignments and interest in assignments. Retained students responded more negatively than nonretained on this item with 52.7 percent indicating that they seldom became interested in assignments or projects. Nonretained students were more positive with 36.3 percent responding quite often and 23.0 percent being interested daily. Chi square for this item was 17.81 with a significance level of 0.00.

In responding to the item regarding taking the same course again, 52.3 percent of the nonretained would take the courses again but only 27.3 percent of the retained said they would take the courses again.

The null hypothesis is rejected. The data for these items are displayed in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 17

Student Enthusiasm for Work

(Item 17)

	Percent of Student Responses			
STATUS	Never	Hardly Ever	Quite Often	Everyday
Retained	7 12.7	29 52.7	14 25.5	5 9.1
Nonretained	22 19.5	24 21.2	41 36.3	26 23.0
Total	29 17.3	53 31.5	55 32.7	31 18.5

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
17.81	3	0.00

Table 18

Course Preference

(Item 23)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	All	More than Half	About Half	Fewer than Half	None
STATUS					
Retained	15 27.3	21 38.2	19 34.5		
Non-Retained	58 52.3	15 13.5	20 18.0	12 10.8	6 5.4
Total	73 44.0	36 21.7	39 23.5	12 7.2	6 3.6

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
28.73	4	0.00

Items 15, 24, and 25 elicited the student's feeling about classes and classwork. Retainee responses for item 15 were generally positive about eagerness to attend classes with 30.9 eager to attend all and 41.8 eager to attend most classes. The nonretained group indicated that a majority (77.7 percent) were eager to attend classes. This was significantly higher than the 30.9 percent of retainees.

Items 24 and 25 also asked for responses relative to enjoyment of classwork.

Nonretained students' responses were 33.3 always, 13.5 percent often, and 46.8 percent sometimes. Retainee responses show that 18.2 percent were eager all the time, 41.8 percent often, and 40.0 percent sometimes.

Item 25 responses indicated that 56.4 of retained students felt that classwork was sometimes busy work. Nonretained students were more positive with 44.4 percent responding that it was never busy work.

Responses to item 24 indicated how students enjoyed the work in classes. Only 18.2 percent of retained students enjoyed the work all the time, but 33.3 percent of nonretained students always enjoyed the work.

There was a significant difference between retained and nonretained students in their enjoyment for classwork on the three items. The level of significance was 0.00 for item 15, 0.00 for item 24 and 0.00 for item 25. The null hypothesis is rejected for three items.

The data for these items are displayed in Tables 19, 20, and 21.

Table 19

Eagerness to Attend Classes

(Item 15)

	Percent of Student Responses			
	All	Most	Half	1-2
STATUS				
Retained	17 30.9	23 41.8	13 23.6	1 1.8
Non-Retained	87 77.7	6 5.4	7 6.3	3 2.7
Total	104 62.3	29 17.4	20 12.0	4 2.4

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
53.00	4	0.00

Table 20

Enjoyment of Classwork

(Item 24)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
STATUS					
Retained	10 18.2	23 41.8	22 40.0		
Non-Retained	37 33.3	16 13.5	52 46.8	5 4.5	2 .8
Total	47 28.3	38 22.9	74 44.6	5 3.0	2 1.2

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
19.71	4	.0.00

Table 21

Liking of Classwork

(Item 25)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
STATUS					
	5	9	31	3	7
Retained	9.1	16.4	56.4	5.5	12.7
	14	16	26	4	48
Non-Retained	13.0	14.8	24.1	3.7	44.4
	19	25	57	7	55
Total	11.7	15.3	35.0	4.3	33.7

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
22.52	4	0.00

Item 16 asked how the two groups rated their teacher's ability to teach. Nonretained students considered them far above average with 36.3 percent responding in this category. They rated them above average with 26.5 percent responding in this category. The retained group rated them above average with 48.1 percent responding in this category to average with 37.0 percent responding in this category. Chi square for the item is 17.84 with a significance level of 0.00.

The null hypothesis is rejected. The data are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22

Rating of Teacher Ability by Students

(Item 16)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Far Above Average	Above Average	Below Average	Average	Far Below Average
STATUS					
Retained	5 9.3	26 48.1	20 37.0	1 1.9	2 3.7
Non-Retained	41 36.3	30 26.5	29 25.7	6 5.3	7 6.2
Total	46 27.5	56 33.5	49 29.3	7 4.2	9 5.4

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
17.84	4	0.00

Item 23 elicited responses relative to the quality of schoolwork. The work is sometimes dull and boring according to 56.4 percent of the retained group. Among the nonretained, 20.9 percent felt that the work was dull and boring. In the category of

never dull and boring 39.1 percent of the nonretained answered positively and 20.0 percent of the retained answered positively. Chi square for this item was 21.92 with a significance level of 0.00.

The null hypothesis is rejected. The data are displayed in Table 23.

Table 23

Quality of School Work

(Item 27)

	Percent of Student Responses				
STATUS	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Retained	3 5.5	4 7.3	31 56.4	6 10.9	11 20.0
Non-Retained	10 9.1	20 18.2	23 20.9	14 12.7	43 39.1
Total	13 7.9	24 14.5	54 32.7	20 12.1	54 32.7

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
21.92	4	0.00

Item 19 elicited responses relative to how students felt about school. The nonretained students felt that they and the school were good friends or friends. The percentage for the category of good friends was 27.7 and 39.3 percent. Retained student responses indicated that many felt that they were distant relatives with 45.3 percent responding in this category. Only 11.3 percent of retained

students felt that they were good friends. Chi square for this item was 35.0 with a significance of 0.00. The data are displayed in Table 24 at the .05 level.

The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 24

Liking for School

(Item 19)

	Percent of Student Responses				
	Goal Friends	Friends	Distant Relatives	Strangers	Enemies
STATUS					
Retained	6 11.3	18 34.0	24 45.3	4 7.5	1 1.9
Non-Retained	31 27.7	44 39.3	9 8.0	13 11.6	15 13.4
Total	37 22.4	62 37.6	33 20.0	17 10.3	16 9.7

Chi Square	D.F.	Significance
35.00	4	0.00

Research Question

Is there a difference in the cost for educating retained and nonretained students?

School A spent a total of $18,752 over four years to educate each student who was regularly promoted from grade to grade. For a student who was retained at least once, $23,440 was spent. The approximate additional cost incurred by retaining 13 students was $60,944.

School B spent $18,587 to educate each student who was regularly promoted. For a student who was retained $23,233 was spent. The additional cost incurred for educating 43 students who were retained at least once was $199,778. The total amount spent for retaining 58 students in the two schools was $260,722.

Table 25

Annual Per Pupil Allocation for Educating Students in Case Study Schools

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
School A	$3,815	$4,294	$5,119	$5,524
School B	$3,800	$4,110	$5,303	$5,374

Research Question

Do retained overaged students create more discipline problems than nonretained students?

Fifty-two teachers and four administrators in the two case study schools were asked their opinion concerning the discipline of retained overaged students.

A majority of teachers at all grade levels except kindergarten responded "yes" to the statement that retained overaged students created discipline problems. The percentages were higher in the early grades 1, 2, and 3. The four administrators in the case study schools did not feel that the retained students created more discipline problems.

Table 26 displays a summary of the findings.

Table 26

Teacher Responses to Question of Whether More Discipline Problems Were Created by Retained Overaged Students

Percent of Yes Responses by Grade

K(N=10)	1(N=8)	2(N=8)	3(N=8)	4(N=8)	5(N=8)	ADM.(4)
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
50%	90%	88%	88%	75%	75%	0%

The questionnaire designed by the researcher was sent to teachers and administrators in the two case study schools. All of the

questionnaires were returned. The results for the total instrument can be found in Appendices M and N. The information which follows the narrative represents items about which the respondents had strong feelings.

Item 3 refers to the guidelines which had to be followed when the policy was implemented in the school system. Documentation of mastery for each skill was required. At least 50 percent of the teachers at all grade levels except kindergarten felt that their work had been made harder.

Item 6 indicated that there are strong feelings among teachers that they should have more input into the decision to promote or retain a student. At the kindergarten and third grade level, 100 percent of the teachers felt that they should have input.

Item 8 referred to the new or different materials which teachers felt were needed to help teach the required skills successfully. Kindergarten and third grade teachers felt strongly that materials had not been provided. At least 50 percent at all grade levels felt that adequate materials were not provided.

Over 50 percent of teachers at all grade levels except third and fourth felt that inservice to teach new strategies was not provided. The percentage was highest at the kindergarten and first grade levels.

Item 15 solicited responses concerning motivation. Eighty percent of first grade teachers' responses to this question were negative at; the second grade level, 75 percent were unsure as to

whether retention motivated students. At the third grade level, half of the teachers felt that it did and half felt that it did not motivate students.

The responses were mixed in response to the poor home environment as a cause of failure. Eighty percent of the kindergarten teachers did not consider it a cause, over half of the second grade teachers were unsure if it was a cause and 75 percent of fifth grade teachers did not think that it caused failure.

A majority of teachers at all grade levels answered negatively to the statement that poor teaching causes student failure. In grades kindergarten, 1, 2, and 4, 70 percent or more answered negatively to this item. The fifth grade teacher responses varied. However, at least 50 percent answered negatively.

The responses of the administrators did not vary as greatly as those of classroom teachers. They were totally in disagreement with teachers on the discipline item where 100 percent felt that the retainee did not create more problems. Their views were split on the adequacy of materials and services being provided. Seventy-five percent also agreed with teachers that retaining a student did not motivate him to do better. They also agreed that the home environment did not cause failure. Poor teaching as a cause of failure was rated "yes" by all administrators.

Tables 27 and 28 summarize the above data.

Table 27

Distribution of Teacher Responses By Grade Level to Pupil Progress

Policy Survey – Grades Kindergarten through 3

(Percentage of Teachers Indicated Each Response)

Item	Kindergarten (N=10)			Grade 1 (N=10)			Grade 2 (N=8)			Grade 3 (N=8)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
3. Retention Policy has made your work harder.	20	80	0	50	50	0	38	63	0	13	75	13
4. Retained overaged student create a discipline problem.	40	50	10	90	10	0	88	13	0	88	0	13
6. Teacher and administrator judgement should have more impact on promotional decisions.	100	0	0	60	20	20	75	13	13	100	0	0
8. Materials and services for retainees have been adequate.	0	100	0	10	80	10	38	68	0	13	88	0

Table 27 Continued

Item	Kindergarten (N=10)			Grade 1 (N=10)			Grade 2 (N=8)			Grade 3 (N=8)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
10. Inservice to help teachers with remediation strategies has been adequate.	0	80	20	10	80	10	50	50	0	25	38	38
15. Retention motivates a student to work harder.	40	30	30	0	80	20	13	13	75	50	50	0
19. Student failure is the result of poor home environment.	20	80	0	40	40	20	13	25	63	13	63	25
18. Poor teaching cause failures.	10	70	10	30	70	0	0	75	25	13	63	25

Table 28

Distribution of Teacher and Administrator Responses to Pupil Progress

Policy Survey – Grades 4 and 5 and Administrator

(Percentage of Teachers Indicating Responses to Selected Items)

Item	Grade 4 (N=8)			Grade 5 (N=8)			Aministrator (N=4)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
3. Retention Policy has made your work harder.	38	50	13	38	50	13	0	100	0
4. Retained overaged student create a discipline problem.	75	25	0	75	0	25	0	100	0
6. Teacher and administrator judgement should have more impact on promotional decisions.	88	0	13	50	50	0	100	0	0
8. Materials and services for retainees have been adequate.	25	50	25	50	50	0	50	50	0

Table 28 Continued

Item	Grade 4 (N=8)			Grade 5 (N=8)			Aministrator (N=4)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
10. Inservice to help teachers with remediation strategies has been adequate.	38	38	25	38	63	0	25	75	0
15. Retention motivates a student to work harder.	13	75	13	0	75	25	0	75	25
19. Student failure is the result of poor home environment.	25	50	25	0	75	25	0	100	0
18. Poor teaching cause failures.	0	75	25	0	50	50	0	100	0

Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the data collected for this study. Tables were constructed to display the data which was collected and analyzed.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the effects that retaining a child in the same grade had on achievement gains in reading and mathematics of fifth grade students in a large urban school system. The number of students retained in the same grade increased in this school system during the eighties following the implementation of a local policy which required mastery of a specified number of skills before promotion to the next grade level. Also, during the same period, a state policy was enacted which required that students at grade 3 reach a specified criterion level in both reading and mathematics before progressing to the next grade.

A review of readings and research reports in the area of retention and related factors revealed general agreement that retaining students was an ineffective practice and caused other problems as students matured.

Several studies were conducted with students in the early grades to ascertain the effects of retention on achievement. Sheperd and Smith (1987) found no difference between retained and nonretained students in a two-year kindergarten program. Niklason (1987) found that younger children who were promoted in spite of recommendations for retention maintained approximately the same mean reading score after one year, and that younger

retained students showed a decline. Sandoval's (1984) study of first graders found no difference in size, self-concept, IQ or social skills for retained and nonretained students. Jackson's (1975) extensive review of research studies on retention concluded that there was no reliable body of knowledge to indicate that retention is more beneficial than promotion. Ebey (1981) studied the achievement of low achieving fifth grade students who were promoted and low achieving students who were retained. The retained students did not match the level of achievement in reading of the promoted group, but did attain the same level of achievement in mathematics. Holmes and Matthews (1984) conducted a meta-analysis of retention studies and results showed that retained students did poorer academically than promoted students.

The literature also highlights two other issues related to retention. One is the fact that the strict requirements would impact the at-risk student and that high failure rates would be found among this group (Neil, 1978; Selden, 1983). Nancy Paulu (1987) underscored concerns relative to dropout problems. Her study of the causes found that the single best predictor of who drops out were students who had repeated a grade. Schulz, M.; Toles, R. & Rice, W. (1987) and Grissom (1989) support these findings citing the most frequent reasons found for students dropping out are:

(1) they are two years behind their peers in reading and mathematics.

(2) they have been kept back one or more times before seventh grade.

FINDINGS

Hypothesis I

There is no significant difference in the achievement gains for retained and nonretained students in reading

In exploring this area, the achievement level of the two groups were analyzed first and then the gains were computed. The scores as recorded for the retained group from first grade through fifth showed that they increased in achievement from first grade through third, then dropped in fourth grade and showed improvement again in the fifth grade. However, the nonretained group started out significantly higher and the mean score for the nonretained group remained significantly higher through fifth grade. The mean score for the two groups in first grade were 33.94 (retained) and 52.21 (nonretained) and in fifth grade the scores were 40.23 (retained) and 49.28 (nonretained). The gap had closed but the two groups will enter middle school with a significant difference in the achievement level in reading. The rate of gain fluctuated during the elementary years with a significant difference of 0.00 reported in grade 3.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the achievement gains in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

When the scores were calculated for achievement in mathematics, the data indicated a significant difference at all grade levels. The achievement mean scores for retained students declined in fourth grade, but increased in fifth grade. The nonretained groups scores declined in third grade and increased in fourth and fifth. The state promotional test is given in grade 3 and an extra effort is made to prepare students for the test. Students who are receiving remedial help are given more attention at this time which might account for the increase at this grade level. The rate of gain was significant at every grade level except fourth. These findings indicate that even though both groups are being instructed at the same level, the nonretained are experiencing more growth.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in reading for retained and nonretained students.

Students are required to attend school 180 days during the school year. Both groups had acceptable attendance. The mean score for attendance for the retained group was 171.3 days and for the nonretained group, 172.4 days. There was a significant relationship between attendance and reading for the nonretained group. The difference in the scores might be explained by looking at the instructional techniques for the two groups. The reading

passages on the ITBS at this level are more sophisticated and the questions generally call for drawing inference and conclusion, and identifying explicitly and implicitly stated main idea. Most retained students are in remedial programs where the instruction is heavily geared toward word recognition and drill and practice activities.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between attendance and academic achievement in mathematics for retained and nonretained students.

Attendance for both groups was good based on the number of school days required to be present for the year. The retained group attended an average of 171.3 days and the nonretained attended 172.4 days. Pearson r for the retained group was .271 and for the nonretained, .153. There was no significant relationship between attendance and mathematics achievement for the two groups. In mathematics, the two groups used the same level books; therefore, the instructional strategies for both groups were the same. The total mathematics score on the ITBS is used to calculate the score which means that computation and problem solving items are included in the total score. The results might suggest that some regrouping of students be done on an ongoing basis.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the level of self-concept of retained and nonretained students.

Responses to the self-concept scale were grouped into six clusters: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity and happiness and satisfaction. The responses on 76 items indicated that retained students feel as positively about themselves as nonretained students. Some of the items referred to situations outside of the school setting. This could indicate that when the students are among family members and peers, they feel more capable of being able to compete and perform in a satisfactory manner.

Of the four items where a significant difference was found, the retained student responses were more positive than the nonretained. A greater percentage of retained students felt that their friends and classmates like their ideas. They did not feel that their classmates made fun of them, nor did they feel as anxious about tests as the nonretained student. These findings could indicate that nonretained students might feel incompetent at times and need emphasis on building self-concept.

A closer look at the scores in each cluster also reveals that the area where the retained students were least positive was in the intellectual area. The percentages of yes responses were usually less than those in the nonretained category. These findings also have

some support in the results of the attitude toward school test. There were several areas which related to school life and school work where students gave negative responses.

The findings from both instruments indicate that schools need to give more attention to the feelings of students toward school.

Hypothesis 6

There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of retained and nonretained students.

Thirteen of the 27 items used to test this hypothesis showed a significant difference. The analysis of the items indicated that retained students felt negatively about teachers, the importance of school work, their relationship with teachers, about the courses taught and class assignments, the quality of school work, and the teacher's ability to teach. These findings indicate that students who are still in elementary school have concerns about their teachers and the quality of the instruction they are receiving. A feeling of boredom and dissatisfaction with school life could be a cause for low achievement in school subjects.

Research Question

Is there a difference in the cost for educating retained and nonretained students?

The results of this investigation show that a large amount of additional funds are spent to retain students. The figure of $260,722 could possibly be higher since there are probably students who were retained more than one time. The findings indicate that a sizable amount of money is used to keep students in the same grade who are possibly experiencing the same materials and instructional strategies.

Research Question

Do retained overaged students create more discipline problems than nonretained students?

Teachers in grades 1 through 5 felt strongly that these students created more problems, kindergarten teachers did not agree, and administrators strongly disagreed. The finding might suggest that since the kindergarten curriculum is more flexible and instructional techniques are geared more toward interactive activities, teachers are less likely to consider the behaviors as problems at the kindergarten level. The instructional program becomes more structured at the first grade level and requires that students curb their moving about and interacting with other students. Structure is important in the classroom from this level throughout the school career of students.

IMPLICATIONS

Present classroom strategies are not motivating students who have been retained to achieve at the same level as promoted students.

The self-concept of retained students is higher in areas not related to academic tasks.

Classroom teacher and administrators need to have a greater voice in promotional decisions.

Teaching strategies need to vary according to student needs, especially in the area of reading and mathematics.

Students who have been retained have negative feelings about the majority of their school experience (teachers and the curriculum).

Adequate material nor appropriate staff inservice has been provided to those who work with retained students. Ignoring the pedagogy may be limiting student achievement.

The self-concept of students who have not been retained also needs to be addressed, especially in nonacademic areas.

Poor attendance is not a cause of poor academic performance.

Retention has not been a motivating factor for learning.

- Poor classroom performance has more serious causes than a poor home environment or parental neglect.

- The pacing of instruction for retained students puts them further behind their classmates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school system should consider a continuous progress program.

- The school system should provide staff development for teachers who have the responsibility for teaching students who do not progress according to strict curriculum requirements.

- The cost of retention should be studied and suggestions made for reallocating funds. Give priority to hiring personnel who can work with smaller groups, especially in the early grades.

- The school system should reexamine the expectations of remedial programs and the personnel who work with students whose achievement levels are low. Set goals that are reasonable, but that will move students closer to the achievement level of their promoted peers.

- The school system should develop a comprehensive program to help improve the self-concept of all students.

The school system needs to evaluate the existing curriculum and revise it to meet the needs of today's students.

The school system should provide staff development for teachers that will address the needs of the urban child.

A follow-up study should be conducted with the retained students' schools to determine if early retention affected their school progress.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

PERMISSION LETTER

35 Whitefoord Avenue, S. E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30317
May 1, 1990

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a research project to determine how the effects of retention in same grade on fifth grade students in an urban school system.

This study seeks to add some understanding of how retaining a student is affecting achievement in reading and mathematics. You have been involved in the implementation of a policy which has guidelines for promotion from grade to grade. Your opinion will be very valuable to the study.

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return them to me at Whitefoord Elementary School.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Betty Blasingame

Appendix B

PERMISSION LETTER

35 Whitefoord Avenue, S. E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30317
May 1, 1990

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a research project to determine how the effects of retention in the same grade has on the reading and mathematics achievement of fifth grade students.

I would like to administer a Self-Concept Test and an Attitude Toward School Test to all of your fifth graders. Names of students will not be requested.

I would appreciate it if these tests could be returned to me by May 15, 1990. Your help with this project is greatly appreciated.

Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Betty J. Blasingame

Appendix C

LETTER TO ADVISOR

Arletta Brinson, Ph.D.
2114 West Cedar Lane, S. W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30311

Dr. Phillip Bradley, Professor
Clark Atlanta University
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Dr. Bradley:

This is to attest that I supervised Betty Blasingame in the administration and interpretation of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and the Quality of School Life Scale, both of which were used in her study, "The Effects of Retention in the Same Grade and Certain Student Related Factors on the Reading and Mathematics Achievement Gains of Fifth Grade Students in an Urban School System."

All American Psychological Association standards for test use were adhered to in this study. The tests were not altered in any way and as such as the publishers permission was not required.

Yours truly,

Arletta Brinson, Ph.D.
Resource Psychologist
Atlanta Public Schools

Appendix D

COMPARISON REPORT
PUPIL PROGRESSION (1981-1988)

Retention Percent

Grade	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
K	--	--	--	--	--	--	11.6	12.4
1	17.8	18.6	20.2	20.3	20.2	19.9	16.0	12.6
2	--	10.3	12.3	10.1	9.8	11.8	9.8	8.2
3	--	--	12.9	9.1	9.0	15.5	14.0	13.9
4	--	--	--	6.8	7.3	8.2	5.3	5.0
5	--	--	--	--	3.3	3.5	2.9	2.5
6	--	--	--	--	--	7.5	9.6	6.4
7	--	--	--	--	--	--	5.1	3.3

Administrative Placements - Percent

Grade	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
K	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.5	0
1	--	5.5	1.8	2.4	3.2	3.6	3.8	4.2
2	--	--	1.8	3.5	3.6	4.4	5.5	6.3
3	--	--	1.9	4.3	5.0	5.3	5.1	4.7
4	--	--	--	2.9	3.8	4.5	5.6	5.4
5	--	--	--	--	3.3	3.8	4.9	5.6
6	--	--	--	--	--	2.7	5.7	6.4
7	--	--	--	--	--	--	5.1	3.8

Totals - Percent

Grade	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
K	--	--	--	--	--	--	13.1	12.4
1	17.8	24.1	22.0	22.7	23.3	23.5	19.8	16.8
2	--	16.0	14.1	13.5	13.4	16.3	15.3	14.5
3	--	--	14.8	13.4	14.2	20.9	19.1	18.6
4	--	--	--	9.8	11.1	12.7	10.9	10.4
5	--	--	--	--	6.6	7.3	7.8	8.1
6	--	--	--	--	--	10.1	15.3	12.8
7	--	--	--	--	--	--	10.2	7.1

Appendix E

SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

THE PIERS-HARRIS CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE

(The Way I Feel About Myself)

by

ELLEN V. PIERS, Ph.D.

and

DALE B. HARRIS, Ph.D.

Published by

Counselor Recordings and Tests

BOX 6184 ACKLEN STATION NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37212

Here are a set of statements. Some of them are true of you and so you will circle the yes. Some are not true of you and so you will circle the no. Answer every question even if some are hard to decide, but do not circle both yes and no. Remember, circle the yes if the statement is generally like you, or circle the no if the statement is generally not like you. There are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

1. My classmates make fun of me . . . . . yes no
2. I am a happy person . . . . . yes no
3. It is hard for me to make friends . . . . . yes no
4. I am often sad . . . . . yes no
5. I am smart . . . . . yes no
6. I am shy . . . . . yes no
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me . . . . . yes no
8. My looks bother me . . . . . yes no
9. When I grow up, I will be an important person . . . . . yes no
10. I get worried when we have tests in school. . . . . yes no
11. I am unpopular . . . . . yes no
12. I am well behaved in school . . . . . yes no
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong . . . . . yes no
14. I cause trouble to my family . . . . . yes no
15. I am strong . . . . . yes no
16. I have good ideas . . . . . yes no
17. I am an important member of my family . . . . . yes no
18. I usually want my own way . . . . . yes no
19. I am good at making things with my hands . . . . . yes no
20. I give up easily . . . . . yes no

21. I am good in my school work . . . . . yes no
22. I do many bad things . . . . . yes no
23. I can draw well . . . . . yes no
24. I am good in music . . . . . yes no
25. I behave badly at home . . . . . yes no
26. I am slow in finishing my school work . . . . . yes no
27. I am an important member of my class . . . . . yes no
28. I am nervous . . . . . yes no
29. I have pretty eyes . . . . . yes no
30. I can give a good report in front of the class. . . . . yes no
31. In school I am a dreamer . . . . . yes no
32. I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s) . . . . . yes no
33. My friends like my ideas . . . . . yes no
34. I often get into trouble . . . . . yes no
35. I am obedient at home . . . . . yes no
36. I am lucky . . . . . yes no
37. I worry a lot . . . . . yes no
38. My parents expect too much of me . . . . . yes no
39. I like being the way I am . . . . . yes no
40. I feel left out of things . . . . . yes no

41. I have nice hair . . . . . yes no

42. I often volunteer in school . . . . . yes no

43. I wish I were different . . . . . yes no

44. I sleep well at night . . . . . yes no

45. I hate school . . . . . yes no

46. I am among the last to be chosen for games . . . . . yes no

47. I am sick a lot . . . . . yes no

48. I am often mean to other people . . . . . yes no

49. My classmates in school think I have good ideas . . . . . yes no

50. I am unhappy. . . . . yes no

51. I have many friends . . . . . yes no

52. I am cheerful . . . . . yes no

53. I am dumb about most things . . . . . yes no

54. I am good looking . . . . . yes no

55. I have lots of pep . . . . . yes no

56. I get into a lot of fights . . . . . yes no

57. I am popular with boys . . . . . yes no

58. People pick on me . . . . . yes no

59. My family is disappointed in me . . . . . yes no

60. I have a pleasant face . . . . . yes no

61. When I try to make something, everything seems to go wrong . . . . . yes no

62. I am picked on at home . . . . . yes no

63. I am a leader in games and sports . . . . . yes no

64. I am clumsy . . . . . yes no

65. In games and sports, I watch instead of play . . . . . yes no

66. I forget what I learn . . . . . yes no

67. I am easy to get along with . . . . . ves no

68. I lose my temper easily . . . . . yes no

69. I am popular with girls . . . . . yes no

70. I am a good reader . . . . . yes no

71. I would rather work alone than with a group . . . . . yes no

72. I like my brother (sister) . . . . . yes no

73. I have a good figure . . . . . yes no

74. I am often afraid . . . . . yes no

75. I am always dropping or breaking things . . . . . yes no

76. I can be trusted . . . . . yes no

77. I am different from other people . . . . . yes no

78. I think bad thoughts . . . . . yes no

79. I cry easily . . . . . yes no

80. I am a good person . . . . . yes no

Score: _____

Appendix F

PUPIL PROGRESSION POLICY SURVEY

Position: Please check one.

Principal _____ Assistant Principal _____

Teacher _____ Grade Taught _____

Direction: Please give your opinion by checking the appropriate column.

	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Retaining students based on nonmastery of skills is a good practice.	_____	_____	_____
2. The school system's retention policy has been good for all students.	_____	_____	_____
3. The school system's retention policy has made your work harder.	_____	_____	_____
4. Retained overage students create more discipline problems in the classroom than nonretained students.	_____	_____	_____

5. The skills which are required for promotion to the next grade level are satisfactory. _____ _____ _____

6. Teacher and administrator judgement should have more impact on promotional decisions than they presently have. _____ _____ _____

7. Promoting students who are a half year or more below grade level in reading and mathematics places an unfair burden on their next teacher. _____ _____ _____

8. Materials and other services provided for retained students have been adequate for students and teachers. _____ _____ _____

9. Homogeneity of students in each classroom has been enhanced by the system's policy. _____ _____ _____

10. Inservice activities designed to provide teachers with remediation strategies for helping retainees have been adequate. ____ ____ ____

11. Social adjustment is the greatest problem for retained students. ____ ____ ____

12. Other students are hindered by the presence of slow learners in the classroom. ____ ____ ____

13. Social promotion for students is better than retention. ____ ____ ____

14. Students should be retained in a grade until the required content is mastered. ____ ____ ____

15. Retention motivates a student to work harder the next year. ____ ____ ____

16. Retention is usually the result of student laziness. ____ ____ ____

17. A no-failure policy would be better for students than the present policy. _____ _____ _____

18. Student failure is the result of poor teaching. _____ _____ _____

19. Student failure is the result of a poor home environment. _____ _____ _____

20. Student failure is caused by parental neglect. _____ _____ _____

Betty Blasingame
1990

Appendix G

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups on Responses to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Percentage of Yes Responses

Cluster I — Behavior

Item	Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
12. I am well behaved in school.	58.6	66.9	0.84	0.36
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong.	22.8	25.6	0.05	0.83
14. I cause trouble to my family.	15.5	7.4	2.01	0.16
21. I am good in my school work.	94.8	88.2	1.27	0.26
22. I do many bad things.	28.1	37.0	0.99	0.32
25. I behave badly at home.	15.5	18.6	0.09	0.76
34. I often get into trouble.	43.1	58.7	0.09	0.76
35. I am obedient as home.	69.0	65.5	3.22	0.07
38. My parents expect too much of me.	38.6	54.2	0.06	0.81

Appendix G Continued

Item	Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
45. I hate school.	15.8	17.4	0.00	0.96
48. I am often mean to other people.	27.6	43.3	3.47	0.06
56. I get into a lot of fights.	32.8	31.1	0.00	0.96
59. My family is disappointed in me.	20.7	14.0	0.83	0.36
62. I am picked on at home.	21.1	34.5	2.68	0.10
78. I think bad thoughts.	19.3	28.0	1.11	0.29
80. I am a good person.	93.0	96.6	0.49	0.48

Appendix H

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups on Response to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster II — Intellectual and School Status

Item		Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
5.	I am smart.	89.5	90.1	0.00000	1.0000
7.	I get nervous when the teacher calls on me.	39.7	46.3	0.45523	0.4999
9.	When I grow up, I will be an important person.	98.3	96.7	0.1355	0.9073
12.	I am well behaved in school.	58.6	66.9	0.83922	0.3596
16.	I have good ideas.	91.2	92.6	0.00010	0.9920
17.	I am an important member of my family.	84.5	90.1	0.70808	0.4001
21.	I am good in my school work.	94.8	88.2	1.26642	0.2604
26.	I am slow in finishing my school work.	37.9	36.4	0.00144	0.9698
27.	I am an important member of my class.	55.2	56.2	0.00000	1.0000

Appendix H Continued

Item	Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
30. I can give a good report in front of the class.	65.5	65.5	0.00000	1.0000
31. In school I am a dreamer.	29.3	43.0	2.54060	0.1110
42. I often volunteer in school.	62.1	66.9	0.22417	0.6359
53. I am dumb about most things.	20.7	19.0	0.00411	0.9489
66. I forget what I learn.	26.3	17.6	1.28706	0.2566
70. I am a good reader.	82.1	76.3	0.46163	0.4969

Appendix I

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups on Responses to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster III — Physical Appearance and Attributes

Item		Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
5.	I am smart.	89.5	90.1	0.00000	1.0000
8.	My looks bother me.	10.3	21.7	2.67462	0.1020
29.	I have pretty eyes.	82.8	91.6	2.22115	0.1361
41.	I have nice hair.	96.6	86.8	3.13157	0.0768
54.	I am good looking.	87.5	83.2	0.26156	0.6091
57.	I am popular with boys.	51.7	54.6	0.04093	0.8397
60.	I have a pleasant face.	81.0	89.3	1.62947	0.2018
63.	I am a leader in games and sports.	56.1	44.1	1.78664	0.1813
69.	I am popular with girls.	70.9	62.4	0.84897	0.3568
73.	I have a good figure.	77.2	70.1	0.64610	0.4215

Appendix J

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups on Responses to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster IV — Anxiety

Item		Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
4.	I am often sad.	29.3	34.2	0.22782	0.6331
6.	I am shy.	31.0	39.7	0.91234	0.3395
7.	I get nervous when the teachers calls on me.	39.7	46.3	0.45523	0.499
8.	My looks bother me.	10.3	21.7	2.67462	0.102
20.	I give up easily.	27.6	18.2	1.54935	0.2132
28.	I am nervous.	27.6	35.5	0.79073	0.3739
37.	I worry a lot.	55.2	49.2	0.37966	0.5543
39.	I like being the way I am.	82.8	84.9	0.2032	0.8866
40.	I feel left out of things.	31.0	44.2	2.29127	0.1301
43.	I wish I were different.	34.5	24.2	1.60076	0.2058
50.	I am unhappy.	27.6	21.5	0.17562	0.6752
74.	I am often afraid.	24.6	36.4	1.95828	0.1617
79.	I cry easily.	38.6	28.0	1.55226	0.2128

Appendix K

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups

on Responses to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster V — Popularity

Item		Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
1.	My classmates make fun of me.	32.8	50.8	4.45783	0.0347
3.	It is hard for me to make friends.	17.2	17.4	0.00000	1.0000
6.	I am shy.	31.0	38.7	0.91234	0.3395
11.	I am unpopular.	38.6	27.3	1.82686	0.1785
40.	I feel left out of things.	31.0	44.2	2.29127	0.1301
46.	I am among the last to be chosen for games.	34.5	42.1	0.66909	0.4134
51.	I have many friends.	93.1	85.1	1.63469	0.2011
58.	People pick on me.	33.3	46.7	2.29394	0.1299
65.	In games and sports, I watch instead of play.	52.6	43.2	1.01685	0.3133
69.	I am poplar with girls.	70.9	62.4	0.84897	0.3568
77.	I am different from other people.	56.1	61.3	0.24442	0.6210

Appendix L

Comparison Between Retained and Non-Retained Groups

on Responses to Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Cluster VI — Happiness and Satisfaction

	Item	Groups: Retained (N=58)	Groups: Non-Retained (N=1-21)	Chi Square	Significance
2.	I am a happy person.	91.4	90.0	0.00046	0.9829
8.	My looks bother me.			2.67462	0.1020
36.	I am lucky.	10.3	21.7	0.00000	1.0000
39.	I like being the way I am.	82.8	84.9	0.02032	0.8866
43.	I wish I were different.	34.5	24.2	1.60076	0.2058
50.	I am unhappy.	27.6	21.5	0.50791	0.4760
52.	I am cheerful.	82.8	84.3	0.00201	0.9643
60.	I have a pleasant face.	81.0	89.3	1.62947	0.2018
67.	I am easy to get along with.	73.7	77.3	0.11509	0.7344
80.	I am a good person.	93.0	96.6	0.49423	0.4820

Appendix M

Distribution of Teachers' Responses By Grade Level to Pupil Progress Policy Survey

Grades Kindergarten through 3

(Percentage of Teachers Indicated Each Response)

	Kindergarten (N=1)			Grade 1 (N=10)			Grade 2 (N=8)			Grade 3 (N=8)		
Item	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
1	60	40	0	40	20	40	62.5	0	37.5	25	50	25
2	--	50	50	0	60	40	25	62.5	12.5	0	50	50
3	20	80	0	50	50	0	37.5	62.5	0	12.5	75	12.5
4	40	50	10	90	10	0	87.5	12.5	0	87.5	0	12.5
5	80	0	20	80	10	10	100	0	0	25	25	50
6	100	0	0	60	20	20	75	12.5	12.5	100	0	0
7	90	10	0	60	30	10	62.5	12.5	25	50	37.5	12.5
8	0	100	0	10	80	10	37.5	62.5	0	87.5	12.5	0
9	30	40	30	0	90	10	37.5	50	12.5	12.5	75	12.5
10	0	80	20	10	80	10	50	50	--	25	37.5	37.5

Appendix M Continued

Item	Kindergarten (N=1)			Grade 1 (N=10)			Grade 2 (N=8)			Grade 3 (N=8)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
11	10	80	10	70	20	10	50	25	251	12.5	12.5	75
12	30	70	0	60	20	20	12.5	75	12.5	0	87.5	12.5
13	0	60	40	30	60	10	37.5	50	12.5	12.5	25	87.5
14	40	30	30	0	80	20	12.5	75	12.5	0	75	25
15	40	30	30	0	80	20	12.5	12.5	75	0	50	50
16	0	90	10	20	70	10	0	87.5	12.5	0	87.5	12.5
17	30	70	0	30	50	20	0	87.5	12.5	12.5	37.5	50
18	10	7	10	30	70	0	0	75	25	0	100	0
19	20	80	0	40	20	20	12.5	25	62.5	12.5	62.5	25
20	30	50	20	40	30	30	12.5	12.5	75	0	62.5	37.5

Appendix N

Distribution of Teachers' Responses By Grade Level to Pupil Progress Policy Survey

Grade 4, Grade 5, and Administrator

(Percentage of Teachers Indicated Each Response)

	Grade 4 (N=8)			Grade 5 (N=8)			Administrator (N=4)		
Item	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
1	12.5	37.5	50	50	50	0	50	25	25
2	12.5	50	37.5	37.5	50	12.5	0	100	0
3	50	25	25	37.5	50	12.5	0	100	0
4	75	25	0	75	0	25	0	100	0
5	62.5	37.5	0	87.5	0	12.5	100	0	0
6	87.5	0	12.5	50	50	0	100	0	0
7	50	12.5	37.5	62.5	37.5	0	--	100	--
8	25	50	25	50	50	0	50	50	0
9	37.5	25	37.5	25	62.5	12.5	50	50	0
10	37.5	50	12.5	37.5	62.5	0	25	75	0

Appendix N Continued

Item	Grade 4 (N=8)			Grade 5 (N=8)			Administrator (N=4)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
11	62.5	37.5	0	62.5	37.5	0	100	0	0
12	75	25	0	50	50	0	--	100	0
13	37.5	37.5	25	50	0	50	25	75	0
14	0	62.5	37.5	0	100	0	0	100	0
15	12.5	75	12.5	0	75	25	0	75	25
16	0	87.5	12.5	25	62.5	12.5	0	100	0
17	25	25	50	62.5	12.5	25	25	75	0
18	0	75	25	0	100	0	0	50	50
19	37.5	50	12.5	0	75	25	0	100	0
20	25	50	25	0	75	25	0	100	0

Appendix O

RELIABILITY

PIERS-HARRIS SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

Test-Retest Reliability

Test-retest reliability measures the extent to which scores for a single individual are consistent over time and across settings. A personality measure should be fairly stable if it is to provide information about the individual. However, self-concept may be less stable among younger children whose sense of self is still under development (Harter, 1983). Thus, low test-retest reliability in the lower age ranges may be partially due to the instability of the underlying construct rather than measurement error per se.

A number of studies have investigated the test-retest stability of the Piers-Harris with both normal and special samples. Test-retest reliability data are reported in Table 12. The reliability coefficients ranged from .42 (with an interval of 8 months) to .96 (with an interval of 3 to 4 weeks). The median test-retest reliability was .73. In reviewing these studies, it should be remembered that reliability estimates which are based on more heterogeneous samples are expected to be higher due to less construction in range. If a small standard deviation is obtained in a given sample for any reason, the test-retest reliability is expected to be lower. In addition, the fact that shorter test-retest intervals are generally associated with higher reliability estimates is also consistent with

expectation since there is less chance that environmental or developmental changes will have affected children's self-concepts.

Test-retest reliability in general populations. An early study by Piers and Harris (1964) investigated the stability of the Piers-Harris using a 95-item version of the scale with a retest interval of four months. Approximately half the early standardization sample was used from grades 3, 6, and 10. The resulting coefficients of .72, .71, and .72 were judged satisfactory for a personality instrument in the experimental stage of development, especially given the relatively long test-retest interval. The revised 80-item scale, through shorter, was shown to have better stability using both a 2-month (r = .77) and a 4-month (r = .77) test-retest interval (Wing, 1966). These coefficients were based on 244 fifth graders.

A study by McLaughlin (1970) of normal students in grades 5, 6, and 7 reported stability coefficients ranging from .71 to .75 with a test-retest interval of 5 months. Platten and Williams conducted two studies (1979, 1981) of the scale's factorial stability and reported test-retest reliabilities. The scale was administered to white, black, and Mexican-American students in grades 4, 5, and 6. The investigators reported reliability coefficients of .65 and .75. Finally, a more recent study (Shavelson & Bolus, 1982), involving a test-retest interval of 5 months, obtained a reliability coefficient of .81 for a group of white, upper-class, seventh and eighth graders. Thus, temporal stability estimates generally support the results reported with the standardization sample.

Appendix F

Attitude Toward School Test

ace _____	Boy ____ Girl ____

QSL

The Quality of School Life Scale

Joyce L. Epstein
James M. McPartland
The Johns Hopkins University

To The Students:

The questions in this booklet will help you and others who seek to improve schools to understand how you feel about school and things that happen in school.

Read each question carefully. Then mark one answer that is closest to what you think. Remember — this is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work on your own. It is important to tell what YOU really think.

Check one . ✓) answer that tells best what YOU think.

18. Thinking of my teachers this term, I really like . . .
- ____ 1. all of them.
- ____ 2. most of them.
- ____ 3. half of them.
- ____ 4. one or two of them.
- ____ 5. none of them.

19. The school and I are like . . .
- ____ 1. good friends.
- ____ 2. friends.
- ____ 3. distant relatives.
- ____ 4. strangers.
- ____ 5. enemies.

20. The work I do in most classes is . . .
- ____ 1. not at all important to me.
- ____ 2. not too important to me.
- ____ 3. pretty important to me.
- ____ 4. very important to me.

21. This term my teachers and I are . . .
- ____ 1. on the same wave length.
- ____ 2. on the same planet.
- ____ 3. somewhere in the same solar system.
- ____ 4. in two different worlds.

22. The things I get to work on in most of my classes are . . .
- ____ 1. great stuff — really interesting to me.
- ____ 2. good stuff — pretty interesting to me.
- ____ 3. OK — school work is school work.
- ____ 4. dull stuff — not very interesting to me.
- ____ 5. trash — a total loss for me.

23. If you could choose to take any courses at all, how many of your present courses would you take?
- ____ 1. All of them.
- ____ 2. More than half.
- ____ 3. About half.
- ____ 4. Fewer than half.
- ____ 5. None of them.

Read each statement. Then check (✓) Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom or Never to tell how often the statement is true for YOU.

	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
24. I enjoy the work I do in class.	____	____	____	____	____
25. Work in class is just busy work and a waste of time.	____	____	____	____	____
26. I feel I can go to my teacher with the things that are on my mind.	____	____	____	____	
27. School work is dull and boring for me.	____	____	____	____	____

Appendix Q

Descriptor Terms: PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS-ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL	Descriptor Code: IE-R	Issued Date: 8/1/86
	Rescind: IE-R	Issued: 6/27/86

1. Progression of students in reading and mathematics will be continuous from one grade level to the next. Students will progress by fulfilling the Georgia Department of Education's and Atlanta Public Schools' standards for progression as specified below. The classroom teacher will have the primary responsibility for determining whether the student will be promoted, retained or administratively placed in accordance with progression criteria, subject to review and approval by the principal.

   Atlanta Public School's Guidelines:

   1.a. Mastery of the prescribed minimum requirements for progression:

   1.a.1. The student will demonstrate mastery of the minimum reading skills as determined by prescribed indicators of skill mastery and by teacher evaluation. The student's performance in the basal (based on end-of-level tests and the teacher's professional judgement) will be at a level which indicates that the student is capable of beginning the next required basal magazine.

   Specific requirements in reading will include both the mastery of minimum reading skills *and* successful performance in the basal reader level as listed below:

   Grade K: 10 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Getting Ready to Read

   Grade 1: 15 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Honeycomb-Level E (Primer)
   Third Magazine

   Grade 2: 15 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Sunburst-Level G (21)
   Third Magazine

   Grade 3: 17 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Caravans-Level (31)
   Second Magazine *and*
   Georgia Criterion-Reference Tests (See 1.b)

   Grade 4: 15 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Journeys-Level J (32)
   Third Magazine

   Grade 5: 19 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Medley-Level K (4)
   Fourth Magazine

   Grade 6: 18 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Keystone-Level L (5)
   Third Magazine

   Grade 7: 16 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Impressions-Level M (6)
   Second Magazine

   Grade 8:* 18 Minimum Reading Skills *and*
   Basal: Encore-Level N (7)
   First Magazine

*Effective 1987-88

1.a.2. The student will demonstrate mastery of the minimum mathematics skills as determined by prescribed indicators of skill mastery and teacher evaluation. To assist students in mastering minimum skills in mathematics, the Houghton-Mifflin Mathematics Textbook Series (1-8) has been adopted systemwide.

Specific requirements in mathematics for student progression will include the skills listed below:

Grade K: 11 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 1: 12 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 2: 15 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 3: 17 Minumum Mathematics Skills
and
Georgia Criterion-Reference Tests (See 1.b)

Grade 4: 16 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 5: 17 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 6: 17 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 7: 17 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Grade 8:* 14 Minimum Mathematics Skills

Interpretation

The student who has mastered all minimum progression requirements will be promoted.

The student who has not mastered all progression requirements should be retained in the current grade placement.

In exceptional cases with proper documentation, the student may be administratively placed in the next grade. When a student is administratively placed in the next grade, instruction should be provided at the student's instructional level in reading/mathematics.

Georgia Department of Education Guidelines: Promotion and retention for *third* graders.

1.b. Demonstration of acceptable performance in reading and mathematics on the *Georgia Criterion-Reference Tests* (GCRT) for promotion from third to fourth grade, effective August 1985.

*Effective 1987-88

1.b.1. Students shall meet APS promotion requirements as specified above in Item 1.a for third graders as well as demonstrate acceptable performance on the *Georgia Criterion-Referenced Tests* (GCRT) in order to be promoted to the fourth grade.

Students who do not meet the requirements of the *Georgia Criterion-Referenced Tests* (GCRT) shall be given an opportunity for retesting prior to the beginning of the following fall term.

Students failing to meet the State promotional requirement to pass the *Georgia Criterion-Referenced Tests* (GCRT) shall be retained for a minimum of one year.

Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for handicapped students shall include standards for promotion. The IEP/staffing minutes will include a statement indicating whether the *Georgia Criterion-Referenced Tests* (GCRT) will be a promotion requirement. (See Procedures for Handicapped Students)

Atlanta Public Schools' promotion requirements must be met for promotion to the next grade as described in this document.

Interpretation

- Students who master APS promotion requirements and pass the GCRT will be promoted.
- Students who master APS promotion requirements and fail the GCRT will be retained.
- Students who pass the GCRT and fail to master APS promotion requirements will be retained or administratively placed, if indicated.
- Students who fail the GCRT and fail to master APS promotion requirements will be retained.

(Failing the GCRT refers to results after the three test administrations.)

2. Documentation: This plan requires one indicator to verify mastery of minimum skills and two indicators to verify non-mastery, except for those skills which are to be documented solely through teacher observation. Indicators used must be those identified in the APS Reading and Mathematics Programs.

3. Administrative Placement: No student will progress from one grade to the next without achieving mastery of the prescribed minimum requirements as stated in Item 1, unless the student is administratively placed according to procedures herein specified.

Administrative Placement of students in the next higher grade level of the school organization will be available for use in exceptional cases. Use of this procedure must be *approved by the Area Superintendent.* It is not to be used on a general basis for the progression of students who do not master skills. Adherence to the criteria for determining mastery of minimum standards will be the basis for student progression.

Administrative placement indicates that the student, for whatever reason, has not achieved the minimum standards required for his/her grade placement. In all cases of Administrative Placement, the student's *permanent record folder and report card should indicate "level assignment by administrative placement."* A statement of the major reasons for the Administrative Placement must be signed by the principal and placed in the permanent record folder. Included in the statement should be information regarding the student's (a) current level of performance and (b) anticipated social adjustment and growth in the grade placement being considered. Administrative Placement Form 67253 will be used for this purpose. All administratively placed students will be reported on the end-of-year Report of Pupils Retained and Administratively Placed.

4. Retention: The student who does not satisfactorily achieve established minimum requirements for the grade to which he/she is assigned will be assigned to the same grade for the next school year. The student will be provided instruction on his/her performance level designed to continue his/her progress toward mastery of the required standards.

   This plan does not limit the number of years a student may be retained in a grade, but the decision to retain a student more than once in the same grade should be based on the professional determination that another year in the same grade will benefit him/her academically. Otherwise, the student should be administratively placed according to the procedures set forth in Item 3. The name of each student who will be retained more than once in the same grade must be submitted to the area superintendent by the same date that parents must receive the Notice of Non-Progression, along with an instructional plan showing the services to be provided for the student next school year. Use form 67305. A copy of the instructional plan should be placed in each student's diagnostic folder for instructional use next year.

5. Records will be maintained on each student for documentation. These records must contain the (a) Indicators of Mastery and (b) Progression Skills Report which identifies the minimum skills that have been mastered based on the minimum skill standards. For each student who has demonstrated mastery of minimum standards, indicator booklets should be maintained *through* the first semester of the next school year; other indicators should be maintained in the diagnostic folder (See Item 6). The Progression Skills Report will be completed at the end of each school year to document student progress.

6. The Indicators of Mastery and Progression Skills Report referred to in Item 5 above must be maintained in an orderly fashion in the student's diagnostic folder. When the student withdraws, the Indicators of Mastery and Progression Skills Report will be placed in the student's permanent record folder and transferred expediently according to Board Policy (JR-b-R, as specified in the Administrative Services handbook) from one teacher or school to the next as the student transfers or progresses.

7. Information to Parents: The principal will insure that the school is appropriately disseminating information to parents about (a) promotion requirements and (b) student progress toward meeting the minimum standards for promotion.

   Promotion requirements are delineated in the Pupil Progression Plan Brochure 67270. Included in the brochure are minimum skills, basal level, and criterion-referenced tests required for promotion to the next grade. The brochure will be distributed at the beginning of each school year and at any time thereafter when a student enrolls in a school or as a reminder to parents.